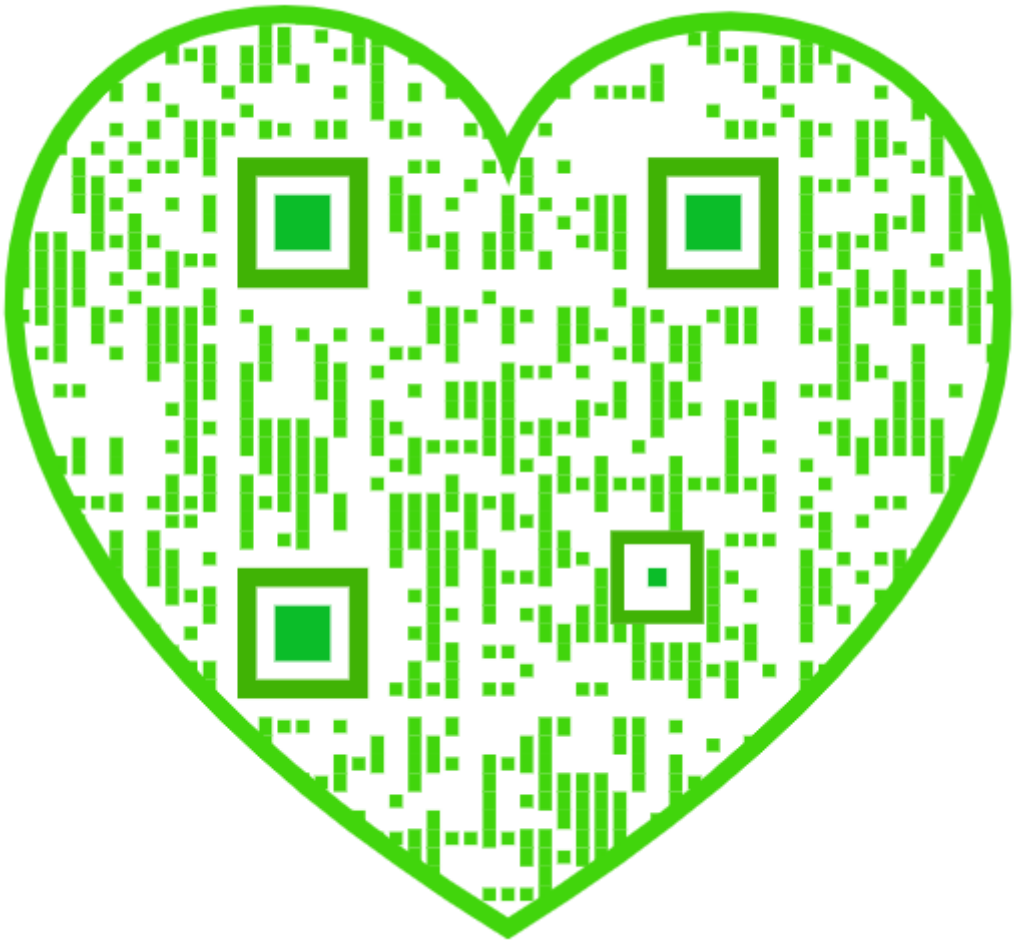

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Fiber Arts Oral History Series

Bob Stocksdale

PIONEER WOOD-LATHE ARTIST, AND MASTER CREATOR OF BOWLS FROM FINE AND RARE WOODS

With an Introduction by
Sam Maloof

Interviews conducted by
Harriet Nathan
in 1996

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Since 1954 the Regional Oral History Office has been interviewing leading participants in or well-placed witnesses to major events in the development of Northern California, the West, and the Nation. Oral history is a method of collecting historical information through tape-recorded interviews between a narrator with firsthand knowledge of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of preserving substantive additions to the historical record. The tape recording is transcribed, lightly edited for continuity and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewee. The corrected manuscript is indexed, bound with photographs and illustrative materials, and placed in The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, and in other research collections for scholarly use. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account, offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is reflective, partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

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Indiana farm life influences, maintaining machinery, tools, woodworking; WWII Conscientious Objector camps, fire-fighting, turning bowls, building boxes; Berkeley house and workshop, learning the craft; worldwide search for fine and rare woods and buying, drying; planning the bowls, use of tools, lathe and gouge; pricing pieces, showing work, association with galleries, museum collections, private collectors; discusses peers, crafts organizations, Association of Wood Turners; marriage to Kay Sekimachi and "marriage in form" work.

Introduction by Sam Maloof, Designer/Woodworker.

Interviewed 1996 by Harriet Nathan for the Fiber Arts Oral History Series, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Bob Stocksdale, 1993.

Photograph by Ed Saylan

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PREFACE

The Regional Oral History Office was established in 1954 to augment through tape-recorded memoirs the Library's materials on the history of California and the West. Copies of all interviews are available for research use in The Bancroft Library and in the UCLA Department of Special Collections. The office is under the direction of Willa K. Baum, Division Head, and the administrative direction of Charles B. Faulhaber, James D. Hart Director of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Since the beginning of the oral history program, artists in many fields have taken their place among the memoirists. When the art of handweaving went through an upheaval during the 1950s, fiber artists gained new recognition, and developed novel ways of using fiber as a means of individual expression. The creativity of fiber artists has won them a significant place in the complex of artistic activity, particularly in the San Francisco Bay Area, and has established the importance of their development and history. Under the leadership of the late director of The Bancroft Library, James D. Hart, the Fiber Arts Oral History Series was begun in 1983.

The emergence of the Bay Area as a center for fiber arts was stimulated by a number of influences including those of faculty members at the University of California at Berkeley and at Davis. Departments of Decorative Arts and of Design at Berkeley were led for many years by Professor Charles Edmund (Ed) Rossbach, now Emeritus, who was the first memoirist in the oral history series on Fiber Arts. The second memoirist was Katherine Westphal (Rossbach), Professor of Design, who gave strong and innovative leadership in the Department of Applied Behavioral Sciences at the Davis campus from 1966 until her retirement as Professor Emeritus in 1979. The third memoirist in the series was fiber artist Lillian Elliott. She worked with students in a number of Bay Area centers, with extended periods in the Design Department at the University of California at Berkeley, and the California College of Arts and Crafts (CCAC) in Oakland. The fourth memoirist was the weaver Kay Sekimachi. Her work also involves off-loom techniques such as split-ply twining, folding and stitching paper to create boxes or stacked columns, and more recently, paper bowls. Among the significant leaders in the Bay Area were such renowned fiber artists as the late Trude Guermonprez, who taught at CCAC and was a mentor to Kay Sekimachi, and the late Dorothy Wright Liebes, whose San Francisco studio generated innovative fiber concepts and designs for industry.

Bob Stocksdale provided the fifth oral history memoir in the series on Fiber Arts in the San Francisco Bay Area, a series that reflects some of the varied techniques and materials involved in fiber arts. He is a

self-taught artist who calls himself a wood turner or wood lathe artist, one whose name is virtually synonymous with wooden bowls of the highest quality. He is a creator and explorer who learned in the early fifties how wood turning with the use of lathe and gouge can transform local and exotic fine woods into bowls of breath-taking beauty. Some are sturdy salad bowls that he says should be scrubbed from time to time. They are handled and admired every day for years, and remain fixtures on the family dinner table. Others are thin-walled ornamental bowls displayed as art objects in galleries, museums, and often in private collections.

Honored by his colleagues, he resists giving advice to the new and hopeful would-be turners, except in common-sense terms: It is important to like and understand tools and machines, and to know how to rebuild, repair and adjust them; to locate the wood you need and know its possibilities, characteristics, and behavior; to learn by trial and error. His other accomplishments are only implied. The long accumulation of knowledge, understanding, and experience, the development of the artist's eye that sees possibilities in an irregularity or flaw and transforms it into unique beauty, these are his own creations. They are the basis for his authority.

Members of the Fiber Arts Advisory Committee have provided valuable advice in the development of the series. The committee includes Hazel V. Bray,* Curator of Crafts, Oakland Museum; Gyöngy Laky, Professor of Design and more recently chair of the Art Department, University of California at Davis; Cecile McCann, former publisher and editor-in-chief, Artweek; Frank A. Norick, Principal Museum Anthropologist, Hearst Museum of Anthropology, UC Berkeley; Ed Rossbach, Emeritus Professor of Architecture (Design), UC Berkeley; Carol Sinton, fiber artist, San Francisco; Katherine Westphal, Emeritus Professor of Design, UC Davis; and James D. Hart*, Emeritus Professor of English, and Director of The Bancroft Library.

The oral history process at the University of California, Berkeley, is based on tape-recorded interviews with persons who have contributed to the development of the west. The purpose of oral history memoirs is to capture and preserve for future research the perceptions, recollections, and observations of these individuals. Research and preparation of a topic outline precede the interview sessions. The outline is prepared in conjunction with close associates and other persons in the memoirist's field, as well as with the memoirist, who in turn may use the suggestions as aids to memory, choose among them, or add new topics.

---

*Deceased during the term of the project.

The tape-recorded interviews are transcribed, lightly edited by the interviewer, and reviewed and approved by the memoirist. An index and other materials are added. Final processing includes final typing, photographic reproduction, binding, and deposit in The Bancroft Library and other selected libraries and collections. The volumes do not constitute publications, but are primary research materials made available under specified conditions for the use of researchers.

The Fiber Arts series is supported by grants from the Mina Schwabacher Fund and a donation from the Friends of The Bancroft Library. The philanthropies of the late Mina Schwabacher have included support for hospital programs that serve children, as well as scholarship bequests to Whitman College in her birthplace of Walla Walla, Washington. The Mina Schwabacher Fund was a gift to the University of California at Berkeley in honor of her brother Frank, who was a loyal alumnus and supporter of the University. The Regional Oral History Office acknowledges with appreciation the generous and essential support for the project.

Willa K. Baum, Division Head
Regional Oral History Office

Harriet Nathan, Project Head
Fiber Arts Series
Regional Oral History Office

January 1998
Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

INTRODUCTION by Sam Maloof

I was first introduced to the world of wood turning by the industrial designer Henry Dreyfuss in 1948. We had a meeting at his home in Pasadena, California, concerning some furniture that he wanted me to do for his new home. During my visit he showed me some bowls that I had commented on. He told me that a friend of his, James Prestini, had made them for him. I had never seen bowls turned so thin and to such perfection. Some years later I met Bob Stocksdale at the Los Angeles County Fair. We both had been invited to show and demonstrate how we worked. This took place in 1952.

At that time Bob was primarily turning salad bowls and smaller serving bowls that were being sold at Gump's in San Francisco, though his first sales outlet was at the Helen Winnemore Gallery and also at a gallery in Washington, D.C.

We met again in 1957 at the first American Craft Council Conference at Asilomar (Monterey). That was the beginning of a long friendship with Bob and several other wood workers (Walker Weed, John Kapel, Art Carpenter, and Wharton Esherick). Later, on a visit to his home and workshop, we viewed the transformation from salad bowls to the beautiful classical forms that he still produces to this day. They reminded me of the beautiful Chinese ceramic bowls that I had seen in some of my books and in museums. Much later I read a statement by Bob, and I quote, "The Chinese have been borrowing my forms for two thousand years." I am sure he said that with a smile. Never one to follow the crowd, Bob has always been independent about what he believes--both in his life and in his work and often expresses himself quite strongly.

Though Bob worked wood as a boy on his father's farm, he took to turning as a Conscientious Objector at a camp he was assigned to during World War II. It was not a very popular thing to do at that time, but he held to his convictions of right and wrong, and to which he still adheres today. That same strength over the years has made him the most preeminent wood turner today--not only in the United States but internationally as well.

In a recent exhibition in Los Angeles, Bob at the age of eighty-three proved his ability in the objects that were shown and the consistency of his work. Though he has been troubled with failing eyesight, his work is still a standard that younger wood workers strive to reach; the old master prevails.

Recently I viewed a private collection of hundreds of pieces throughout the world, an eye opener that was awesome. The work was of the utmost degree of perfection, inventive and baffling in its makers'

skill but most lacked SOUL.

I have stated often that the most difficult thing to design is the most simple object and also the most difficult to make. Simplicity is what attracts me and many others to Stocksdale's work. He has not let any of the new trends and fads change his direction. He continues to work as he always has--a continuity that moves forward--a goal so many strive to reach today and fail.

I once wrote that Bob seemed to be able to see in a piece of wood what others could not. After reading what I had written Bob laughed and said, "You may think so but it just turns out that way." But Bob does study the piece of wood much as a diamond cutter studies a stone, and a piece of wood that others might scorn becomes a jewel in wood.

Some time ago I read a review of a book, Taste, and one statement stood out: "Continuity is better than change." Bob is a traditionalist who has set his own standards and others follow.

Bob's workshop is a very modest place in which a self-taught wood turner produces the finest work, sought by so many museums, collectors, and individuals.

Sam Maloof
Designer/Woodworker

November 3, 1997
Alta Loma, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY--Bob Stocksdale

Bob Stocksdale calls himself a wood turner or a wood lathe artist as he has done for decades, and continues to transform wooden logs and planks into the superb bowls that carry his name. He is recognized as a pioneer and leader in his chosen field; his colleagues honor him for "consummate craftsmanship" and for his "commitment and contribution to the field of wood turning." Both his skill and his renown have played a part in the growing interest in wood as a chosen medium for art and a powerful reminder of nature's bounty.

He takes his place as the fifth memoirist in the Fiber Arts Series of the Regional Oral History Office of The Bancroft Library. Other artists in the series have used both man-made and natural materials that include fronds, stripped leaves, vines, paper, thin wooden strips, reeds, twigs and branches. He chooses to work with the logs and planks that are major segments of trees themselves.

When Bob Stocksdale (not Robert, a name he dislikes) agreed to provide his oral history memoir for the Fiber Arts Series, the interviewer offered a suggested outline of possible topics for discussion, compiled from a variety of sources. Sincere thanks are due a number of consultants. Librarian Janice Capecchi and Tran Turner, then curator of Decorative Arts, made available the holdings of the library of the Oakland Museum of California. The items included pictures, papers, articles and reviews of art exhibits and craft shows, as well as catalogs, books, and other publications. Background information and several photos for this volume came from Rhonda Brown and Tom Grotta of the Brown/Grotta Gallery in Wilton, Connecticut, who reminisced about their association with Bob and his wife, weaver Kay Sekimachi. Bay Area collectors of Stocksdale bowls were represented by Claudine and the late Hellmut Gerson, with his own extensive knowledge of wood. Their collection includes Bob's salad bowl of black walnut, which they have used and enjoyed for years, a familiar emblem of their hospitality.

The interviews took place on August 12, 19, and 27, and on September 13 and October 21, all in 1996. Sessions typically began at one p.m. and lasted from an hour and a half to two hours. The tape-recorded interviews were then transcribed, lightly edited and furnished with heads and sub-heads, and then submitted to the narrator for review and approval. He responded to a few questions for clarification and made corrections as needed, and also amplified his narrative with written inserts that appear between square brackets in the volume. He reviewed and approved the full transcript.

In his eighties, Bob Stocksdale has the look and manner of a considerably younger man. He is alert, ruddy, compact, genial, and down-to-earth. He speaks easily, thoughtfully, and succinctly in an account that is livened by candor and colored by amusement. During some of the sessions, he was undergoing eye treatments, but saw no reason why the interviews should be delayed. The first, second, fourth, and fifth interviews took place as planned at the ample dining room table. The house that he and Kay share is serene; nothing clamors for attention. The handsome Maloof furniture, and the art objects, both their own and carefully chosen works by other artists, quietly announce their presence.

For the third interview, Bob led the way down the front steps and turned right to his workshop with its outside entrance past a rosebush and the corner of the house. From the doorway, the workshop opens to the left and right, with substantial machinery ranged around the walls and near his workbench. Here Bob works alone, by choice. He does, however, welcome the cheerful volunteer help of friends who drop by to move hefty chunks of wood and logs for him, report on a bandsaw project, or perhaps to say hello and drop off a book for Kay.

Walking around the shop, Bob patiently explained the name and function of each piece of equipment, for example, bandsaw, lathe, and sander. The workbench stands opposite the entrance, near a door that leads to another part of the large basement area, and smaller rooms. One appeared to be a storeroom, another had shelves where bowls awaited finishing or stand ready for display and sale. A few bowls had come to grief by accident at the hands of their owners, and needed repair.

On a wall behind the workbench in the main room, a number of hand tools hang in rows. Bob identified some as dental tools, old and new, that he uses in delicate work such as cleaning out cracks and filling them with epoxy and the correct color of sanded wood dust from his collection. Others are antique tools he admires for their aesthetic presence. His regard for and expertise with tools reach back to his boyhood, when he discovered the wonder of tools, and knew that he loved them all. He gloried in visits to a tinshop run by his great-uncle, and to his grandfather's hardware store. There he ranged free, exploring and touching tools, and was given a series of pocket knives of his own. He lost them, one after another, except for the last one, which he still uses. He has given it a heavy wooden handle, and virtually reshaped the main blade by sharpening it repeatedly over the years.

Early on, both preference and necessity led him to repair, care for, and use old tools, an exercise he continues to enjoy. He tells of rebuilding an abandoned bandsaw that is still in working order some one hundred and eighty-five years after it was originally built. His love of tools is not, however, purely antiquarian. He has worked on tool design with his engineer friend Jerry Glaser, and together they designed

a turning gouge made from a 9/16" rod of tool steel. Glaser now manufactures the gouge, and occasionally makes up samples of tools for Bob to test for him.

Bob's skill with his gouge and lathe is so remarkable that he seems to a watcher to be able to do almost anything with wood. Because he understands both the range and limits of his own skills, he says he cannot design and make fine furniture as his friend Sam Maloof does, nor create the exquisite Brazilian rosewood birdwhistles he has collected. His admiration for the fine skills of others includes a tiny gold tie-tack that his friend Allan Boardman made for him. It is a puzzle consisting of finely shaped and fitted bars of gold that hold a jade ball in the center. Boardman has warned against trying to dismantle and reassemble the puzzle, and Bob has promised that the puzzle and its secret are safe.

When he is in his workshop, standing before the lathe with a piece of wood in his hands, his face is alive with anticipation. He is looking for the hidden beauty that the tree's nature and growth have created inside the rough log or plank that appears as unremarkable as firewood. With his tools, he finds what he seeks: contrasts in shading or tone, a radiation pattern, an interesting grain, a knot or flaw, markings where a branch has grown from or been grafted to the trunk. He notes the clues that pose the problems and possibilities he enjoys. He considers how to make the best use of the wood at hand and reveal what it has to offer; to interpret what it suggests or dictates, the shape, the edge, the profile of the one or more bowls the wood can provide. Here his experience comes into play. Holding a piece of pistachio, he points out that pistachio is "one of the few woods that looks even better in a salad bowl than it does in a decorative bowl... And nobody has a pistachio bowl unless they got it from me, because nobody ever thought of making them one."

The workbench in the main room of his shop holds a number of bowls in process. He keeps them there for a month or so while he monitors their progress in drying. He fits stainless steel plumber's bands around the outside surface of each shaped bowl to prevent or at least control cracking. Some bowls display a few bands placed at intervals; others carry so many that they appear to be covered in metal. With a wrench, he tests and tries the fastener of each band to keep it as tight as possible. His attention to these bands never falters. He says, "I never miss a day right through the weekend... I tighten the bands up."

When the bands can be tightened no further, he takes the nearly dry bowls to the large hood over the kitchen stove, where gentle heat and a little moisture from the cooking can complete the job. At this stage, he still continues to keep the bands tight as the drying goes on. He has noted the differing ways various fine and rare woods respond. He says, for example, "... macadamia wood itself has such a tendency to

crack in the drying process that nobody else works it... Even the wood turners over in Hawaii never mess with macadamia, and here I've got customers from all over the country wanting macadamia bowls."

Before he could focus fully on the refinements of his art, Bob had to find ways to acquire fine woods. He also had to determine his level of one-man production, to set prices, and to sell what he produced. To find rare woods meant locating sources, meeting wood collectors individually or in an organization, and becoming a collector himself. He joined the International Wood Collectors Society very early, as member #547, and watched the interest in wood rise as the membership grew beyond 6,000. While he was still in Conscientious Objectors camp in World War II, Bob was becoming acquainted with major collectors. Two who wanted to sell their holdings of wood set their prices low so that he could buy them. By now he has also acquired a volunteer corps of friends who search out rare woods for him in this country and overseas.

His integrity and clarity of purpose are evident in the care he takes in creating each bowl. He likes to remember Helen Winnemore, his first gallery owner, who urged him to keep up the quality above all, advice that fit both his own convictions and the control possible in a one-man operation. This discipline has worked two ways. It has given him great satisfaction and joy in the work he produces and won a discerning and devoted following. It has also closed off the possibilities of making more bowls to satisfy the demands of fine stores across the country. He has weighed the choices, has no regrets, no mass production, and no agent for promotion.

Bob is naturally friendly and outgoing, and when he shows his bowls or an occasional platter, they seem to sell themselves. Word-of-mouth and faithful collectors keep up the demand. As a recent visiting collector remarked, she needed "a Stocksdale fix." Finally, he resists pressure to charge what the traffic will bear and let prices go sky-high. He says he doesn't want to price his friends out of the market; he is satisfied to be able to make a living.

He recognizes his kinship with many men, and some women, who are drawn to wood turning and to the equipment of a workshop. When the owners of the Brown/Grotta Gallery display Bob's and Kay's work, they see that women tend to turn directly to Kay's weavings, while men go the other way to Bob's wooden bowls. He noted with amusement that "Please, don't touch" signs adorned both exhibits. Touching can damage weavings, but not wood, and Bob now requests that all his displays carry the sign, "Please, touch."

The signs encourage people to do what they want to do anyway, but it is not as easy as it looks. They soon learn that picking up and holding a Stocksdale in both hands is natural and rewarding, but they

often find it hard to put the bowl back on the shelf, and walk away without it.

This memoir has benefited from several written accounts of Bob's work, in particular Sam Maloof's eloquent Introduction, and the superb catalog essay by Curator Signe Mayfield for the "Marriage in Form" show that originated in 1993 at the Palo Alto Cultural Center. Amaury St. Gilles and Yoshiko Uchida were noteworthy among reviewers of Bob's work in newspapers and other publications, and the 1975 book Craftsmen in America published by the National Geographic was a significant addition.

A selected bibliography and list of exhibits and collections appears in the Appendix of this memoir, some entries focusing on Bob's work, others including Kay's as well. Special thanks are due to Kay, who located articles and other materials from household files and collections and with quiet effectiveness, helped move the interview process along. Bob collected an array of papers that will be submitted to The Bancroft Library for deposit there.

Harriet Nathan, Project Head
Fiber Arts Oral History Series

October 1997
Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley

Regional Oral History Office
Room 486 The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California 94720

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name Bob Stocksdale

Date of birth May 25, 1913 Birthplace Warren, Indiana

Father's full name Roland C. Stocksdale

Occupation farmer Birthplace New Philadelphia, Ohio

Mother's full name Edith Kriegbaum Stocksdale

Occupation housewife Birthplace Warren, Indiana

Your spouse Kay Sekimachi

Occupation fiber artist Birthplace San Francisco, CA

Your children Joy Stocksdale, Kim Stocksdale

Where did you grow up? Indiana

Present community Berkeley CA

Education high school

Occupation(s) wood lathe artist

Areas of expertise wood work, exotic and local woods

Other interests or activities

Organizations in which you are active International Wood Collectors Society (early member); American Association of Wood Turners (honorary member)

dictated to Harriet Nathan 4/15/9

I FAMILY AND EARLY YEARS ON THE FARM

[Interview 1: August 12, 1996] ##[1]

Nathan: Would you like to begin talking about your early years and school and family?

Stocksdale: Sure, but I think it would be a good idea to start at the beginning.

Nathan: Sure. What was it, 1913?

Stocksdale: 1913, yes. And actually, I was born in a small town in Indiana, but shortly after I was born, my parents moved to a farm, and then I lived on a farm the rest of my life, until I was twenty-five and was drafted by World War II. My father had kind of a business of buying old farms and fixing them up, and then selling them after they were fixed up and improved. Then he would buy another farm.

Nathan: What kind of farm was it?

Stocksdale: It was general purpose farming, you know, all kinds of agriculture and pasture for cattle, and we had cows and chickens and all kinds of livestock. But see, after he started having a family, he decided he'd better settle down and not jump from one farm to another with the family, so he bought this farm when I was about five years old, I think, and we moved to it. So that's where I spent most of my childhood, from the age of five on.

Nathan: Were there any brothers and sisters?

Stocksdale: Yes, they kept coming along.

Nathan: How many in total?

---

[1]## This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. A guide to the tapes follows the transcript.

Stocksdale: All together, there were five of us. I had one brother that was a year and a half older, and then I was second in line, and then another brother came, and then my sister, and then after a long wait, another brother came.

Nathan: Would you want to give their names?

Stocksdale: Yes, the older brother is Bill, and then I was number two, and then number three was Jere [spells], it's the way he spelled it, the way the family spelled it. Then my sister Virginia, and then my brother John was the last one. They were named after their grandparents or something like that, but I don't know why they picked Robert. I hate that name. So I always say Bob and correct people, and my business name is Bob. I don't use Robert at all.

Anyway, and Jere is another one that didn't have family connections to get his name, but Virginia was named after her grandmother, Rachel Virginia Stocksdale. [Our other grandmother was Margaret (Maggie) Kriegbaum] And John was named after two great uncles, John and Philip. My parents were Roland and Edith.

Nathan: Was the family mostly from the Midwest?

Stocksdale: Yes, they were all from the Midwest, and they originally spent quite a bit of their childhood in Ohio and Pennsylvania. Then they gradually got to Indiana; and mostly German origin on both sides of my family, although the name Stocksdale is English. But I don't think we have any relatives from England at all. We still have a few relatives in Germany, distant relatives.

Chores, Cows, and Milking

Nathan: As a youngster, did you have chores, work to do on the farm?

Stocksdale: Too much. [laughter] I hated the farm work, from start to finish. On the farm, as soon as we were old enough, we had to milk cows, for one thing, and gather eggs from the chickens for another, and then as we grew older, why, there was the usual farm chores of hauling manure and making hay and threshing the grain. We had all kinds of livestock, really. Some beef cattle and some cows.

Eventually, the farm sort of lent itself towards dairy cows, and we started selling milk to the Chicago Milk Shed,

even though we were about 120 miles from Chicago. They came every day, but they had a lot of specifications for the way that the milk was taken care of and everything. So that was always a big chore, to keep the milk cool, cool it off immediately as soon as it came out of the cow, strain it and take care of it until the milk truck came and picked it up. We were always hassling with the milk in the mornings. It was a matter of pumping water to get enough water to circulate around the milk cans that were in the milk house. We had to build a milk house, and it had a little tank in it for the milk cans, the ten-gallon cans.

Nathan: And that's how you kept the milk cool?

Stocksdale: And that's how we cooled it. We had what's called an aerator, and it was special coils that had circulating cold water going through them. The milk came down over these coils, and it cooled very quickly. Then it went into the milk cans, and then we'd put it into the milk house and leave it to cool for two or three hours until the milk truck came.

Nathan: That was every day including weekends?

Stocksdale: That's right. [laughter] Twice a day. We had to milk the cows twice a day, because some of them were big producers. So once in a great while, they'd have to milk three times a day if a cow was really a big producer, but hardly ever. So anyway, that was the main chore on the farm, so I always had to help. I would have certain cows that I would milk, and my older brother would have cows that he milked, and my dad had cows that he milked. So the cows got sort of used to us, you see.

Mechanical Abilities

Nathan: Did you have anything to do with maintaining that machinery, the cooling system?

Stocksdale: Yes, too much, [laughter] because nobody else was mechanically inclined. And so my chore, especially in the cold winter time, was to get the gas engine started to pump the water from the pump, get the pump thawed out, and then get the pump running. This was an old Fairbanks-Morse one-cylinder engine. It ran a little pump jack and pumped the water. We did have a windmill too, but the windmill you couldn't depend on at the

right time, you see, when you needed the water, why, the pump had to work. Usually the wind died down then.

Nathan: [laughs] Just at the right time.

Stocksdale: So we'd have to fire up the old Fairbanks-Morse engine and get it going. It was worn out years ago, but I managed to get it started every time. Then eventually, the Northern Indiana Public Service started electrifying the neighborhood, and so that was right in the Depression, really. We didn't have money enough to put in the wiring to tap into the electric line, so we kept on for two or three years after the power line went past our house, and I would look up and dream about this electric line. [laughs] So I just kept digging at my dad to get electricity, and finally, finally, he broke down and borrowed money and put in an electric line and had our house wired and the barn wired. Then it was a little better, because we didn't have any problem with the pump engine.

One-Room and Consolidated Schools

Nathan: Not easy. Did you manage to get to school?

Stocksdale: Yes, actually the first two or three years that I went to school, it was only a quarter of a mile up the road. It was a little one-room school. That was what I expected to go to when I got six years old, I guess. The kids would walk by our house, and we'd stand out there and watch them, and eventually, we went to the one-room school. I went to it for about four years, and at one time, I was the only student in my grade. There were only about twenty-five or thirty students all together in the school, and they went from first grade to eighth grade, and that's all. Then they had a consolidated school about two miles away. After the fourth grade, they decided to eliminate the one-room school and put everybody in the consolidated school. That's when they went around: we called them "kid hacks."

Nathan: Kid hacks?

Stocksdale: Yes, kid hacks. [laughter] They were regular buses, picked up the kids. So we rode that and went around over the countryside, picking up kids, and eventually ended up in the consolidated school. It was a pretty big school. Each township in Huntington County had a consolidated school.

Nathan: Did the consolidated school go through high school?

Stocksdale: Through high school, yes. And so that was the extent of my education, going through high school, graduating there in Union Township High School. That took care of my education, really.

Nathan: How would you judge the quality of education that you got, first in the one-room school and then in the consolidated school, as you look back on it?

Stocksdale: Well, I guess the one-room school was not too bad, because me being the only kid in my class, I would sit in with the kids ahead of me. I didn't have to answer many questions or anything. And then the teacher would come around and quiz me occasionally. So I got a pretty thorough education in the third and fourth grades. I could have skipped the fourth grade, you see, but my parents didn't think it was a good idea, so I went in the consolidated school, where there was, I think, fourteen or fifteen kids in my grade then.

Nathan: Was there any class that you especially liked?

Stocksdale: No. Of course, I really enjoyed manual training, they called it then, but the teacher didn't know any more about wood working than I did, I found that out.

Hardware Store and Tin Shop

Nathan: And how had you gotten to know about wood working?

Stocksdale: Well, right from the beginning on the farm, I had a little outbuilding that I called my shop, and I did--oh, just collected tools, mostly, and hammered things together, and learned about using tools and that sort of thing. I just loved to collect tools of all kinds, and so I had quite a collection of old tools, mostly. Then, of course, the best education was that my grandfather owned a wonderful hardware store.

Nathan: Was this your father's father?

Stocksdale: No, my mother's father, George Kriegbaum of Kriegbaum Brothers in Warren, Indiana. My grandfather on my father's side was William Stocksdale.

Nathan: So you would go into town to see him in his hardware store?

Stocksdale: Well, his hardware store was fourteen miles away from our farm, and so occasionally, when I was a little kid, I'd get to go in and stay at Grandma's for a week at a time or something like that, or a few days. So then I would spend a lot of time in the hardware store, just crawling all over it, looking in every drawer and everything. It was a big hardware store.

They had a wonderful tin shop on the second floor, and my great uncle, my grandfather's brother Al Kriegbaum, ran the tin shop. He did all kinds of tin work. They made, oh, special galvanized iron buckets and things like that, you know. They'd do special jobs for roofing and all kinds of things.

Nathan: So you would watch them actually make equipment?

Stocksdale: Yes, and I'd play around on these tools. They were all hand-powered tools for the tin shop; they would crimp the tin so that it could be soldered together. That was fascinating. Uncle Al would spend a lot of time with me, because I was always fascinated by that, so that was a lot of fun, too. I always stood in front of the case that had the pocketknives. [laughter] Along would come Grandpa, and he would pull out a pocketknife and give it to me. And then I would proceed to lose it. [laughter]

Nathan: Did you ever try to whittle with it?

Stocksdale: Oh, yes, I'd whittle with it, and I learned to keep it sharp and everything, you know. And then every once in a while, though, I'd lose the pocketknife. I don't know how I could do that, but it happened. So then he'd give me another one.

Nathan: What a nice man.

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: So in a way, was that your first tool?

Stocksdale: Yes. And then as time went on, why, Grandpa died, and then his two sons worked in and sort of took over the hardware store, so that's why they called it Kriegbaum and Brothers. They would occasionally give me a pocketknife. And then as time got on, they sort of died, and then they decided to get rid of the hardware store. That was a blow. Anyway, before that happened, though, my Uncle Ralph gave me this

pocketknife, and I still carry it. Now, that's about fifty years old. [shows knife]

Nathan: It's very heavy.

Stocksdale: Yes, it is, because that's wood. I put that on, because the old handle just wore out. So I put that on.

Nathan: Now, this has three blades?

Stocksdale: Three blades, and you can see that that blade has been sharpened so much that it's out of shape, you see. It should be up a little bit.

Nathan: Oh, yes. It's flat where it should be curved.

Stocksdale: Yes. And another blade there that I use more than any other is this one here, and this should be much more curved than it is.

Nathan: And this is shorter than the first one.

Stocksdale: Yes. And that's called a castrating blade, because it was used for castrating pigs and sheep. I use it every day now to putty up holes and cracks in my wood bowls and that sort of thing.

Nathan: And do you use the blade to push the putty in?

Stocksdale: I just use it as sort of a putty knife to putty it in. So it gets gummed up, and then I have to sand it down and clean it up every so often.

Nathan: This knife is how many years old?

Stocksdale: It's about fifty years old.

Nathan: That must have been well made.

Stocksdale: Well, it's not a real good knife, no. It's sort of a run-of-the-mill pocketknife. But I knew I had to keep this.

Nathan: Yes, that made up for all those others. [laughter]

Stocksdale: And I still lose it once in a while, but then it shows up again in my shop.

Nathan: Well, at least it's not under a pile of hay.

Stocksdale: Yes, and I always have fear that I'll drop it down the shavings and scoop up the shavings and put them in my stove, and burn it up. Because that's happened to other tools that I have. My folding rule and things like that. But so far, I've kept the pocketknife.

II FROM SMALL SHOP TO WOODWORKING FACTORIES

Nathan: Pretty good. Well, the pocketknife then was the first tool, and what came along pretty soon after that?

Stocksdale: Oh, well, saws, various kinds of saws. Coping saw and handsaws, and hammers, of course, two or three different kinds of hammers. Because I always had a hammer.

So I started in my little shop there on the farm, started making bird houses. They were pretty crude, but I made a few of them. Then I made some other things, and then I got into refinishing old furniture, and that didn't require much tools. Just using a chemical to take the old finish off, and then sanding it down a bit, and putting on a new finish. So then there would be repair work in a lot of the old pieces.

Nathan: Is this mostly for your own family or your own house?

Stocksdale: It started out originally with mostly family, but then I gradually branched out and took in other people's work and refinished their work too.

Nathan: Did you enjoy that?

Stocksdale: Yes, I enjoyed it too. It didn't bring in much money, but this was during the Depression, so any little bit counted. Of course, I didn't work full-time in the shop either.

Nathan: Were you still milking those cows?

Stocksdale: Yes, still had to milk those cows every morning and evening. And then when it came haymaking time, I had to help make hay, and that was one of the worst jobs that I hated, because it--

Nathan: It gets down your neck?

Stocksdale: Yes, and it was hot, and dusty. We had what was called a hayloader that would go along and pick up the hay and put it up on the wagon, but you had to keep the hay pulled away from it and balance it out on the wagon so that you could take it into the barn and then put it up in the haymow. That was rough work.

Caswell Runyan Cedar Chests

Nathan: Did you have the idea that you would like to get away from the farm?

Stocksdale: Oh, yes. I always dreamed about working in a factory, wood-working factory. There was a big one right in the town that was three miles away, Caswell Runyan was the name of it. [spells] Cedar chests, they made cedar chests. As time went on, I eventually got a job in there, in the cedar chest factory. They put me in a very responsible job, actually, right from the start.

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Stocksdale: And that was a job that I really loved. When it was quitting time, I didn't want to quit. I just wanted to keep on working.

Nathan: Lovely. Was that very nice wood?

Stocksdale: It was all veneered, the chests were Tennessee red cedar, you know; there was very strong cedar odor to them on the inside, but the outside was always veneered with some other kind of wood. Sometimes--usually it was walnut or some exotic wood, but then they would have fancy designs done in little moldings and things like that.

So my job was to put on all those little moldings, and the box would come already made up, but the lid wasn't on it, and the feet weren't on it, and none of the moldings were on it. They were all stuck in the box, so you had to take them out of there and know just where to put them and how to fasten them on. They had to be put on with hot glue. It was kind of a skilled job, so it paid thirty-five cents an hour. But some of the guys on the line there where I was working had been there for a long time, and they were getting fifty cents an hour for doing the same thing, you see.

Nathan: Oh, yes.

Stocksdale: [laughs] Anyway, that didn't bother me at all.

New Tools

Nathan: I wanted to pick up what you were saying a couple of minutes ago, that your father knew the man at the factory.

Stocksdale: He knew some of the officials in the Caswell Runyan factory, and so I think he worked on them a little bit and got them to interview me, you see. So then I went down there and went to work. I didn't have any tools, and so they went down to their supply. They sold tools to the employees at cost, and so they brought a whole set of tools up to me, and those were my tools.

Nathan: That must have been a good moment.

Stocksdale: Yes, and here I had all these brand-new tools. It wasn't very many, but the main tool that I remember was a Yankee screwdriver that had a spiral thing--I still have one down in the shop--that screwed by pressure, you know; you pushed down, and it would wind the screw down, or you'd reverse the thing and it would take the screw out. And that I thought was just wonderful. That was to fasten the feet on and put the hinges on, all everything.

Nathan: That's real precision work that you were doing?

Stocksdale: Yes, you had to be pretty careful. So I got pretty efficient at it and was making as many cedar chests as the rest of the fellows in the line. Usually around ten to twelve cedar chests a day was the output of each one of us in the builder line, they called it. Then the inspector would come along and inspect it. If he saw an area that wasn't sanded properly, why, he'd take his chalk out and put a big S on there, means "sand it again." So we'd have to sand it again before he'd let it go on into the finishing department. So that was the way that worked.

I worked there I think a couple of years.

Nathan: Did you still live on the farm?

Stocksdale: I still lived on the farm, yes, and I still had to do the milking. [laughter] By that time, we had a milking machine, though.

Nathan: Oh, that helped.

Stocksdale: And that helped, since we had electricity. The milking machine would help, and you had to go along and put the machine on each cow. It would do two cows at a time.

Reproducing Antiques and Using a Lathe

Nathan: Did you have any ambition besides doing a good job at the factory? Did you think of the future much?

Stocksdale: Not a whole lot. I still did some refinishing, and I'd started doing a little reproduction antiques. I made a few tables and things like that, and I had accumulated a few more tools in my shop, too. Having electricity, why, the first power tool I got--actually, it was before we got the electricity, but not very long before--I got a lathe.

Nathan: Wow. [laughs] That's pretty major.

Stocksdale: Now, this was such a crude lathe that I didn't even consider making any bowls on it. It was just for spindles, you know, like table legs and replacement parts for antiques, and I even made a few baseball bats for the neighborhood. I operated that with a Maytag washing machine engine, a gas engine from a Maytag washer. It was a very old, primitive Maytag, where the cylinder was up and down. In the newer Maytags, the cylinder went this way, but this one, it was just an up and down contraption. It had a fly wheel, and to start it you just took hold of the fly wheel, and it had a flat belt that went to my lathe, and you'd just take hold of that and give it a pull, and it would start.

Nathan: Ah. When you were doing the reproduction of antiques, did you design the furniture that you were creating?

Stocksdale: No, I would copy the old antique furniture, pretty much. I never was very good at designing as far as furniture goes or anything like that, so I didn't do that.

The Band Saw

Stocksdale: Another sideline in my wood working was that about a mile and a half--no, about a mile, I guess it was--from me was a little furniture factory in a little village called Bowerstown, and that furniture factory made the cheapest, trashiest little end tables and things like that that you could imagine. But they had a pretty good going concern. They had about, oh, ten or fifteen employees, mostly family, and so I would go down there, and they would let me use their tools once in a while, like a band saw. If I had something that I wanted cut on a curve or something like that, why, I'd go down and use their band saw and saw it.

Then I remember one time I made a big library table that I'd copied out of a table catalogue that I got from somebody, and it had two turned legs. So I glued the legs up and took them down there, and then they turned them for me. I was fascinated to see that operation.

Nathan: That was a big project.

Stocksdale: Yes, that was a pretty big project. Yes. And that was even before I worked at Caswell Runyan. Anyway, that little furniture factory was a fascinating place for me.

Nathan: You could tell when it was well made and when it was junky furniture?

Stocksdale: Oh, yes, yes. And they used the cheapest wood they could find, and then they doped it up with a finish, and you couldn't even see the grain of the wood. [laughter] It was pretty bad. But anyway, they had a system, and they had orders for hundreds and hundreds of tables, and they'd run them out.

Eventually, they decided they needed a bigger band saw, and so they put the old one out in the chicken coop, so I finally bought it for ten dollars, and I have it myself now.

Nathan: Really, the same band saw?

Stocksdale: Yes, and so I estimate that it's about 185 years old.

Nathan: Remarkable.

Stocksdale: Yes. And it still does a good job of sawing. I rebuilt it, you know, because the furniture factory had burned down twice,

and they built it up, and then they'd take that band saw out and put new rubber on the wheels and new bearings in the wheels, and get it back to running again. [laughs] [telephone interruption]

Nathan: So I guess the war was coming along then?

Stocksdale: Yes, then the war was coming along, and actually, before that, there was another factory that I started working on.

Nathan: Oh, really? What was that?

Bakery Equipment

Stocksdale: Well, this was called a bakery equipment factory. They came out and interviewed me and wanted to know if I'd go to work for them. I forget how they heard about me, but anyway, they hired me away from Caswell Runyan. The reason I went to them was that the job with them was much more of a challenge, because I got to use all kinds of machinery, wood-working machinery, all kinds. You'd start with the rough lumber, and you'd take it through every step of the way to the finished product. You didn't have to have the--what do you call them?--a production line or anything like that; you did the whole thing.

Nathan: What kinds of things would a bakery need?

Stocksdale: They made all kinds of things for a bakery, whatever a bakery needed. It started out with the big dough trow, they call them, and this was a big box made of yellow poplar. It was for the big batches of bread dough, and they just put it in there. Then they'd take a little bit out at a time to put in the pans to bake, but the first batch was put in this dough trow. Well, that was just one thing. They made huge rolling pins, and they made rolling pins for ravioli, you ever see one of those?

Nathan: Yes, with all those little squares?

Stocksdale: Little squares, yes. And they made the cracker peels, they made peels of all kinds--[spells], and that was to take bread out of the oven. It's a paddle, varying widths. It would depend on the bakery as to how big they wanted. It would go in and take the bread, you had a long handle, and you'd pull the bread out of the oven with it.

Well, the cracker peels operated a little differently. The cracker peels were wide, quite wide, usually from two feet to thirty inches wide, and four feet long, but very thin, and a single handle. The crackers would come out on an endless belt, and they'd scoop up a whole sheet of crackers and put it over here and let it cool enough that they could put them in a box.

So my job was to learn how to do the cracker peels.

Nathan: I see. And so the cracker peels were wood?

Stocksdale: And the cracker peels were wood. This particular factory had some kind of a patent on a very lightweight cracker peel that was very, very special. It was paneled with balsa wood. Now, it was only a half-inch thick at the thick end, but it was paneled, it had panels of balsa wood. Now, you know balsa wood is the lightest wood there is in weight. Well, in order to make this usable, they had invented an edge, a front edge, that was four inches, and it was two layers of what was called airplane plywood. Now, this was plywood that was only a sixteenth of an inch thick, and it was made for making model airplanes.

Nathan: So was it very strong?

Stocksdale: It's very strong, and it was birch, which is a pretty hard wood, you know. The whole thing was tapered from zero to one-half inch, in this big sheet.

Nathan: Sounds like a very elegant tool.

Stocksdale: Yes, yes, and those were the very special ones that only certain outfits bought. But most of them were just made of yellow poplar, and they were half-inch thick too, and tapered down to nothing. But doing those real special ones required a lot of different operations on a lot of different machines. I worked on something like fourteen or fifteen different wood-working machines to do that.

Nathan: What an experience.

Stocksdale: Yes. And so that was--I got a penny more an hour working for them. [laughter] I worked for them until Prince Edward married--

Nathan: Oh, Wallis Warfield Simpson, yes.

Stocksdale: Yes. Because on the way home, the last time I worked for them, I listened to his speech on the radio.

Nathan: "The woman I love"?

Stocksdale: Yes. [laughs]

Nathan: That sets it in time.

Stocksdale: Yes. [laughter] Yes. But that experience was really well worth the effort.

Nathan: That made you pretty expert. Would it be fair to say that you were an expert by the time you had learned to make the peels?

Stocksdale: Yes. This was an old piano factory that was just loaded down with old machines, and they had a big line shaft that ran a whole string of machines with belts. So I got so I could use all of those machines.

Nathan: Did someone teach you?

Stocksdale: Yes, but a lot of them I just learned by myself. I worked on big sanders and things like that; and sanding that balsa wood was very particular, because you could just sand right through it in a minute. [laughter]

Nathan: Don't need more sanding on that one. [laughter] So you were pretty happy in that work?

Stocksdale: Yes, I was real happy with that kind of work, too. So that was fine.

III WORLD WAR II AND THE DRAFT

Stocksdale: Then along came the draft, and I was drafted.

Nathan: Now, did you talk about the war [World War II] and about international problems with the people there?

Stocksdale: Not with the people at the factories, no, not at all. They were all rednecks.

But at home, my older brother was the chief pacifist of the bunch, and he was a reader. He read all kinds of books, especially books on pacifism and peace and alternatives to war, and you name it, he read it. So then he would talk to us other younger kids about it.

Fellowship of Reconciliation

Stocksdale: He organized what's called a Fellowship of Reconciliation--FOR--in town, at the Brethren church. The Brethren was one of the peace churches, although my family didn't go to the Brethren church. They went to the First Christian church, which was just an ordinary church.

Nathan: Did you find his ideas persuasive?

Stocksdale: Yes, I found them very much so. So I would go to all the meetings. Then, of course, along about then, why, there was a lot of agitation for war and everything, and then they organized the draft, Selective Service, and they had a draft board for Huntington County. It turned out that my brother knew all the draft board people. [laughter] So every time he'd see one of them, he'd talk pacifism to them. [laughs] He'd tell them that it wasn't any good to fight those silly

wars and so on. So he was never drafted, because he was running the farm. My dad was getting kind of old, so my brother was operating the farm. It was a big farm, it was 285 acres, which is awfully big for that part of the country. Small for the west, but in Indiana, that was a big farm. It actually was a combination of two farms, so there was two sets of buildings on them. Then my brother got married, and he moved into the other set of buildings, which had a log cabin on it, an old log cabin that was covered with weather boarding on the outside, so you didn't know it was a log cabin. But inside, it was a log cabin, and he lived in that for a couple of years. His wife was quite a pacifist too, and she knew a lot of the pacifist people from Cleveland. She came from Cleveland.

Nathan: Was he in touch with the Quakers?

Stocksdale: Not so much. I think he knew a few of them. When he'd go to the FOR meetings, you know, area meetings, and that sort of thing, he'd get acquainted with the Quakers. But hardly any Mennonites. See, they were the three peace churches: Quakers, Brethren, and the Mennonites. They operated the C.O. [Conscientious Objector] camps.

Conscientious Objector Status

Stocksdale: So when my number had come up for draft, I just automatically said I was opposed to war and I wanted to apply for Conscientious Objector status, and that was all I had to do. They just sent me a form to fill out, and I automatically was assigned to a C.O. camp. I didn't ever have to appear before them or anything, and that was really unusual, because most of the fellows in the C.O. camps had to go to the draft board; they had to write a big statement, and it all had to be based on religion and everything. Well, mine was really sort of political more than religious. Anyway, they just automatically accepted it. And then the same way with my younger brother. His number came up, and so he was drafted. I forget which one of us went first, but Jere is the one.

But the youngest brother, he wasn't drafted for a while because he was so young. He was ten years younger than we were. So he decided to be the black sheep of the family, and he joined the navy.

Nathan: That's interesting how people view themselves.

Stocksdale: Yes. He didn't come under the influence of my older brother. [laughs]

Anyway, that's how we got classified as Conscientious Objectors. We were shipped off to a couple of camps up in Michigan. We weren't sent to the same camp. Jere was in a camp about twenty-five miles north of where I was sent, and so we would visit back and forth once in a while.

Replanting for the Forest Service

Nathan: What kind of duties were you assigned to then?

Stocksdale: Well, that particular camp, and I think the same applied to the Wellston camp which my brother was in, the work project, they called it, was under the auspices of the United States Forest Service, and the project was to replant the area of that part of Michigan that had been cut down to rebuild Chicago after the big Chicago fire. It was all beautiful, big white pine trees, enormous trees--six, eight, ten feet across; big as redwoods.

Nathan: The stumps were still there?

Stocksdale: The stumps were still there. Not very many, but some. So it was just growing up in scrub oak and scrub anything. It really wasn't any good at all. It was just scrub trees of all kinds. And so we went through, and every six feet, each man planted. I think they did it in six-foot squares, and they'd go right down through as near as they could travel, over the brush and everything. They would just walk out six feet and dig a hole and stick in a tree.

Nathan: So you didn't clear the scrub away first?

Stocksdale: Hardly any. We just stuck the tree in.

Nathan: How big was the tree that you put in?

Stocksdale: Oh, so far. [motions]

Nathan: About eighteen inches?

Stocksdale: Yes.

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Nathan: You were describing the six-foot squares and then the little pine that goes--it was a pine, they replanted the same thing that had been there?

Stocksdale: Yes. And so I presume that they would grow up. I've talked to people who have gone back and visited the area, and they say the trees now are up twenty and thirty feet. So I expect they thinned them out to get that size.

Nathan: But they could dominate whatever was already growing, the scrub that you described?

Stocksdale: Yes. Yes, they seemed to do quite well. They just grew up, and the underbrush was sort of crowded out by the big trees then.

Assignment to Headquarters Woodworking Shop

Stocksdale: Now, that was known as the project. So a certain percentage of the camp, there was about, oh, 250 in the camp. Each camp was around 250 inmates.

I was only on the project maybe two or three times at the most during the year or more that I was there in Michigan, because the Forest Service soon found out that I was a wood worker, and they took me into their headquarters. They had the most beautiful wood-working shop that you could imagine, with all kinds of tools and everything, and nobody to run them. So they just put me in charge.

And I'd just do whatever they wanted me to do, which wasn't very much, really. One time they wanted an outhouse, a two-hole outhouse built for a remote area that had a campground, and they wanted an outhouse for that campground. So I, along with the supervisor that was sort of in charge of me, we got together and we made a beautiful outhouse. We put in a hardwood floor, maple floor--[laughter]

Nathan: That is delightful.

Stocksdale: And all de luxe, you know. Then occasionally, I'd make signs for them and things like that. But mostly, just maintaining the tools there in the shop, and I got them all tuned up and kept the tools sharp and so on.

Turning Bowls, Building Boxes

Stocksdale: So one time, my boss said, "Let's try turning a bowl on this lathe," just like that. Yes. I said, "Oh, why not?" [laughter] And--

Nathan: What kind of wood did he bring you?

Stocksdale: Well, we kind of thought. We didn't have any walnut, for instance, there, but we did have some cherry, so I made a bowl out of cherry. It came out pretty good, I guess. He kept it. I got to thinking about it, and I thought, "That would be kind of a fun thing to do." So I made a few more, and kept at it.

So eventually, the camp itself decided they wanted some shop tools for the fellows to work during their spare time to build such things as--what do you call them, a storage box that they used to store their goods in? It's kind of a military term, some kind of a chest. [I think it's called a footlocker] Anyway, a lot of them wanted to make those boxes--to keep their clothes in and that sort of thing. So I conned the Brethren Service Committee, who was operating the camp.

Nathan: Oh, this is the Brethren Service?

Stocksdale: Yes, it was a Brethren camp. I told them that I had a few tools down in my shop in Indiana, and so if I got enough gas coupons, I could drive down there--[laughter] and bring my tools and my shop up here. So they thought that was a good idea. I said, "All you have to do is see to it that they're shipped wherever I want them shipped at the end of the war." They thought that was great, because they didn't have to spend any money.

Nathan: Oh, sure.

Stocksdale: So I said, "I don't care who uses them or anything." So eventually, we got my tools up there, and then somehow or other, I got my little lathe up there too.

Nathan: Still going on that little motor that you had rigged?

Stocksdale: Well, we left that at home, because they had electricity up there, and so I just had an electric Maytag washing machine motor, quarter-horse motor was all I needed. And that was enough to do little bowls and that sort of thing. All the fellows, they wanted to make those chests, and so I would go to a lumber yard and buy up one-by-twelve pine, and we'd cut

it up there in the shop and put it together. I'd get hardware for it and that sort of thing, and build these chests.

A lot of fellows had their wives living in the area around the C.O. camp, and so they would come in and they'd want to do things in the shop too. So I put them to work in making bowls.

Nathan: You taught them how to do that?

Stocksdale: Taught them how to do it, so they'd make bowls. So we had a little factory going. [laughter] But see, then I was doing almost full-time. I'd work at the Forest Service headquarters for eight hours a day, and then in the other place on the spare time. Weekends, holidays, and evenings.

Nathan: Where was the other place? In the camp itself, where all your own equipment was?

Stocksdale: My own equipment was in one of the buildings of the camp. There were lots of buildings in the camp. It was an abandoned C.C.C. [Civilian Conservation Corps] camp, so there were a lot of buildings. We didn't even use all of the buildings. We got enough buildings fixed up with heat and that sort of thing to operate. So then there was other space around that was available.

Nathan: So you were working about twelve hours a day?

Stocksdale: More or less, and weekends too. So it kept me going. I would try to go out on a project once in a great while, because I loved to go out and plant trees for a while.

Nathan: Yes, that's a great thing to do.

Stocksdale: Yes. And then, you see, they had a big detail of men for camp maintenance, too. They not only had to keep the kitchen running, which was a big project, to feed all 250 of us, but they had to buy groceries. So a truck went into the nearest town probably once a day on a buying trip to get supplies. And then they had a wood detail, and this was mostly for the winter wood for heat for the various buildings. So they would go out in the forest and cut all the dead trees they could find. There were plenty of them. They'd cut them up for firewood. So that was a crew of about eight fellows that worked year-round on it.

Nathan: How was the food?

Stocksdale: Food? The food was very good, actually, it was quite good, because the C.O.s themselves did the cooking. [laughter] And some of them were darn good cooks. We had very little complaint about the food. The Brethren Service Committee seemed to just buy most anything that the cooks wanted to cook.

Nathan: [laughs] That was pretty nice.

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: Now, which was Walhalla camp? Were you at a camp called Walhalla?

Stocksdale: Walhalla.

Nathan: That was the one?

Stocksdale: Yes. I guess it got its name from the Indian name of the little village there or something.

Santa Barbara, then Feather River Canyon

Nathan: And then there was some word about a camp near the Feather River in California? When did you go there?

Stocksdale: After about a year or year and a half in Michigan, the government decided, in all their power, that that wasn't work of enough significance. And so they thought, well, more significant work was to be done out in the west, so they decided to ship the whole camp out to the west. In fact, they shipped both of our camps, my brother's camp too. They gave us a choice of either going to the Northwest area, Oregon and Washington, or California. So after a little research, I found the California crews didn't go out in the rain, while the Washington and Oregon did. They just put a tin suit on, it was called, it was a heavy canvas suit, and they'd send them out in the rain. [laughter] Well, actually, I wasn't the main one involved in that, because I figured I could get into the Forest Service headquarters anyway and have a nice warm place to work. So that's the way it worked out. But anyway, a lot of my friends decided on California.

So they shipped us first to Santa Barbara, and we were there for about six months. This was an abandoned C.O. camp too, and it was kind of--we called it the country club of the

C.O.s, because we had a big football field, and they had all kinds of wonderful little rooms and hideaways and things like that that the C.C.C.s had built. They still required very little maintenance, so we just moved into it. It was just a wonderful place.

But there wasn't any forest, you see, and so they didn't know just what to do with us during the winter. But in summertime, of course, there's fire suppression work. That applied to the Feather River Canyon too. Plenty of fire suppression work. They divided the camp up into several different side camps, so they'd have ten to twelve fellows located maybe forty or fifty miles away, still in the forest, in the national forest. So they would ship us, send us out there to these side camps, and we'd stay there for the season really. Then they had the truck that would go around to all of the side camps and service them, take foods and everything, and mail, and so on.

Nathan: So they would take you to where the forest was?

Stocksdale: Yes. But then after six months, they decided that that wasn't a very good location. So they found this C.O. camp up in Feather River Canyon, and that was in the forest, you see. There was lots of forest--

Nathan: Did you like it there?

Stocksdale: Oh, I loved it there, but see, the crowning blow was the project, the work project. In the winter time, we were supposed to clear the right-of-way for the Western Pacific Railroad. Several lawyers that were C.O.s were in the camp, and they just walked up to the Forest Service and they said, "Do you realize that that's unconstitutional?" "No." [laughter] "That's conscription of labor for private industry."

Nathan: Yes, of course.

Stocksdale: And their mouths fell open. They didn't know what to do after they'd gone to all the trouble of moving us up there and everything, getting us located. The only project they could think of in the winter time was to clear the right-of-way for the Western Pacific Railroad. This was when the big Mallys, you know, went up the Western Pacific there, the railroad. You know those--do you know what a Mally is?

Nathan: No, tell me.

Stocksdale: A Mally is sort of two engines that are combined to one set of drive wheels. They have sixteen drive wheels on this one engine, and it's tremendous in size. It's got a tremendous big boiler and everything, and this was to pull the freights up over the Sierras, you know. They'd sometimes have two of those hitched up to pull the freight trains up, and they would really cough up the sparks.

Nathan: I can imagine.

Stocksdale: In the summertime. Anyway, we loved those Mallys, they were so enormous. What a piece of equipment.

So anyway, they scurried around, and they kind of made work for a lot of the fellows, building trails, building some fire trails, and things like that. But I was still in the nice little Forest Service headquarters wood shop, and I was in the Forest Service headquarters wood shop down in Santa Barbara too. So then I got into the one up in the Feather River Canyon.

Furloughs and Fire Time in Berkeley

Stocksdale: Up in the Feather River, and so I would still have the wood shop, and they moved my wood shop from Walhalla out here. I made connections out here, down here in Berkeley, so I would come down here on my fire time and furlough, I'd get two and a half days a month, just like the army does.

Nathan: You'd come down to Berkeley on your fire time?

Stocksdale: Yes, and I worked for Hudson Furniture down here, at Ashby and Adeline, although they weren't at that location when I first got acquainted with them.

Nathan: Did you know people in Berkeley?

Stocksdale: Yes. I had some very close friends. One was a C.O., but he was a Catholic, and that was pretty unusual. He worked for General Steamship Company, and he had a very good job in General Steam. They had a beautiful home up there on The Arlington--no, it wasn't on The Arlington, where was it? It was on Oxford, you know, on 965, I think it is, Oxford. So I got acquainted with them, and they would invite me down for Christmas and Thanksgiving and all that stuff, so that was good.

Anyway, John Higgins was his name, and he's still living. I think he lives out here in Albany in one of those highrise buildings. Polly Higgins is a famous real estate lady. She did mostly commercial real estate. She made a pile of dough from commercial real estate. So they would invite me down, and then they knew Hudson Furniture, and so they talked to Hudson--it wasn't Hudson really, it was a guy named Moorman, his name was Moorman--Lou Moorman.

Nathan: [asks spelling]

Stocksdale: [spells] And his wife, Grace. He has since died, but Grace is still living, and she is running Hudson Furniture down there now. She's married to another fellow that is also in there now, and he is working with her. So I stop in to see them every once in a while. Lou had several pieces of equipment, tools, in a basement some place over on Dwight Way, I think it was, so he'd save up jobs for me to do. He always had work for me to work on on my furloughs and fire time, because once in a while, I'd get called out on a big fire, and sometimes I'd be out for a week, and boy, you really build up fire time then.

Nathan: "Fire time" is what you call it?

Stocksdale: Yes. Fire time, you see, it's based on an eight-hour day work, and if you're out overnight, that's three eight-hour days.

Nathan: I get it. [laughs] Great.

Stocksdale: Or if you're out a week, count 'em up. [laughter]

Nathan: So did you actually have to fight fires?

Stocksdale: Oh, yes, yes. I fought fires over on the Coast Range, over around Ukiah in Mendocino County, and then in the Los Angeles area. In Santa Barbara, I fought fires too. The nicest fire I ever fought, though, was the fire that was very close to Montecito. We'd be walking around in the woods there, and here would be a fire plug. [laughter] And you'd just hitch a hose to it and start spraying.

Nathan: How funny. [laughter]

Stocksdale: Yes. Right in the woods. There wasn't any road or anything, but they had fire plugs in the woods.

Nathan: Was that really for their protection?

Stocksdale: Yes, that was for protection of the rich mansions.

Nathan: Oh, that's a really wonderful story. [laughter]

Stocksdale: [I still keep in touch with many Conscientious Objectors, but usually at a yearly gathering at Jerry Rubin's in Marin. (Not the Jerry Rubin of campus fame.) Our friend Jerry became a landscape designer and designed our garden over forty years ago. He was also Larry Halprin's right-hand man.][1]

[1]Written material inserted by Bob Stocksdale after the taping of the interviews was completed, is identified by square brackets.

IV SHOWS, GALLERIES, AND SHOPS

Helen Winnemore Gallery

Nathan: Well, somewhere along the line, Helen Winnemore came into your life. Do you remember her?

Stocksdale: Oh, Helen Winnemore.

Nathan: Of Columbus, Ohio, her gallery.

Stocksdale: Yes. Well, she came to Walhalla, I think it was. Yes, that's where she came, Walhalla. I was doing a few little bowls there, and she said, "I like what you're doing. I'll take most anything you send. Whatever you do, keep up the quality." So that's been my motto. She said, "I don't care what they cost, but I want the quality."

Gump's

Nathan: Had you thought before of showing in a gallery?

Stocksdale: No, I never thought of it. And then my friends, the Higgins, when I was in the Feather River Canyon up here, said, "Oh, you ought to be selling these to Gump's." I said, "Why not?" [laughter] John Higgins' brother had a big printing shop here in town, I forget the name of that too, but anyway, he was a big-time operator. He said, "I know a buyer over at Gump's. I'll take some things over there and show him." And sure enough, he did. He didn't know the guy from Adam, but he just bluffed his way in. [laughter] And so then I went over and met Bill Brewer, who was the buyer at that time, and he was a real nice, pleasant guy, so he too said he'd take most

anything I made. Of course, I couldn't produce very much, because I had all these people that I had to teach. So I would work at it a little.

Nathan: And did they give you any suggestions about size or the kinds of wood?

Stocksdale: Not really. It turned out that Gump's preferred to have salad bowls and large trays or plates, serving trays. They weren't interested in the decorative bowls or the fancy woods. See, I was getting acquainted all the time with the importers of rare and fancy woods, you see, all the time I was in the C.O. camp.

More on Winnemore

[Interview 2: August 19, 1996] ##

Nathan: Let's take a look at where we were. We had talked a little about Helen Winnemore; I had a note that she was a Quaker?

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: Did that have any particular importance for you or influence you?

Stocksdale: No, but that's how we got acquainted, because she was visiting the Conscientious Objector camps in the Columbus area. She comes from Columbus, Ohio, and so she went up to Walhalla, Michigan, to visit that camp, and that's how I met her. I didn't know her at all before that. So she saw a few bowls that I had made and thought it would be nice to have my work in her gallery. I felt quite honored.

Nathan: Oh, that was wonderful, sure.

Stocksdale: Yes. And when she said, "Whatever you do, keep up the quality. I don't care about the cost; I want quality." So that's sort of my motto ever since.

Nathan: Couldn't be a better one. Do you still have any association with her gallery? Are you still providing her with bowls?

Stocksdale: No, she died less than a year ago, actually, at the age of ninety-five. They may have in their gallery a piece or two of mine, I don't know. I don't really know whether the gallery is in operation now or not. But I rather think it is, because

she had a most wonderful manager to run the store, and so for the past, oh, five years at least, she never even went down to the store. She was kind of bedridden, I think. So anyway, I just got a note from him recently that she had died, I think in May of this year, at ninety-five. No mention of what the store was going to do. It was called Helen Winnemore's Arts and Crafts, and it was in a good location there in Columbus, in a section called Germantown.

Store Galleries' Need for Production

Nathan: Well, she surely was helpful in launching you. Were there other gallery people who were very important to you as well?

Stocksdale: Well, Gump's in San Francisco, and Fraser's here in Berkeley. Those two galleries. Actually, they've turned me on to some other notable galleries, but I didn't sell to any great extent to other galleries.

I did to Neiman Marcus in Dallas at that time. I got acquainted with the buyer on one of my trips to Los Angeles. She was there, and then made an appointment to see me. So I showed her some things, and they bought two or three different times, I think, from me. And then one of the Marcus brothers came over to my shop one time when he was in San Francisco. He selected a few pieces. But then they decided that my production was so small that they didn't want to do a job of promotion, because I couldn't satisfy their needs. Which I was happy about, because I didn't want to have a production line. [laughter]

Nathan: Well, that's very interesting. Quality requires certain things.

Stocksdale: Yes.

V POST-WAR LIVING IN BERKELEY

Nathan: Was your workshop in San Francisco at that time?

Stocksdale: No.

Nathan: Was it always in Berkeley?

Stocksdale: It's always been here in this house. After I left the Conscientious Objector camp, I moved right into this house.

Nathan: I see. Did you want to say anything about your son and daughter? Were they born in Berkeley as well?

Stocksdale: Yes, they were born while we were living on the other side of the house. This is a duplex house, and so this side was rented out, and by the time I got married, I owned the whole house. When I first moved into the house in 1946--

Nathan: Right after the war?

Stocksdale: Yes. [I moved right into that back bedroom there, because I was single. I bought the house with two other friends who were also Conscientious Objectors. They were Bob McLane and Joe Gunterman, with their wives and families, and they went together with me in a three-way partnership. Bob and Naomi McLane had a child, Erica. Joe and Emmy Gunterman had a little child named Karen; I built a cradle for her. I remember when Joe and Emmy moved to the Michigan camp from Cascade Locks.

They lived in the adjoining house, and the McLanes lived in the rest of this house. After about a year, maybe a little more, both men got jobs out of town, so they sold their interests to me.

There was also a small room in the basement, where the previous owner had raised tropical fish. He had worked at the San Francisco Aquarium.]

Marriage and Family

Stocksdale: Then I was doing a little folk dancing, and I met my future wife, Nan Beatty, at folk dancing, and eventually we got married. Then, let's see. I forget the chain of events then.

Nathan: It doesn't matter unless it matters to you.

Stocksdale: No.

Nathan: I had the impression that your daughter Joy, is also an artist?

Stocksdale: Yes. She does silk screening on silk, and you can see some of her work at the Arts and Crafts Co-op at Lincoln and Shattuck. It's worth a trip to see. So she does scarves, beautiful scarves, and jackets and vests and sometimes complete outfits. I don't know just what all she has there now. But she's also the advertising executive for the *Surface Design Journal*, which is a national magazine. Sometimes you can find it on news stands. Mostly, it's just a publication for people interested in surface design; she has charge of the advertising. That's a part-time job. We get most of that information here at the house, because Joy lives in two different places, or has, so she's never home to take UPS and Federal Express things for the ads, so we take them here, and then she has to come at least once a week [laughter] to pick up her mail.

Nathan: I would love to see some of her things. Is Kim at all an artist?

Stocksdale: Not at all, no. No, he's not an artist. He's an engineer, and he did work for Hughes Aircraft in the communications satellite division, which was a pretty good job, but not good enough to make it permanent. He got laid off, along with all the other downsizing. So now he's into computers and teaching computers, so he may work up something that way.

Nathan: He's obviously a person with skills.

Stocksdale: Yes, he's quite skilled. He lives in Los Angeles, so we see him every time we go down, and he comes up here two or three times a year. Anyway, they were two of the easiest children to raise. I just couldn't believe how well behaved they were right from the start. We had no trouble at all with them any time. All through high school and everything. So that was a big relief.

Nathan: [laughs] Absolutely, and pretty unusual besides.

Stocksdale: Yes. And they kind of took care of each other. There was only a year and a half difference between them. Joy was the oldest, and so she would take care of Kim. It wasn't very long until Kim was as big as she was, because she was really tiny, and when she was a baby, she started walking at an early age. She was able to walk right under the table. [laughter] I couldn't believe it.

Nathan: I can just see that. [laughter]

Stocksdale: They were wonderful kids, and still are. So anyway, Joy is married, and Kim is still single. I don't know whether he's ever going to get married or not. But he has a lady roommate down there, he just calls her his roommate, and I don't think they're the least bit interested in each other. They have lived together quite a long time now, and they have a pretty elegant pad down there. It's in Marina Del Rey, right on the waterfront. Kim thought, well, the place is big enough for three, and Kim thought that she'd get another girl for a roommate, because it's two bedrooms and two baths and a big living room. So anyway, she said, "No, I'll pay the two-thirds of it and you pay one-third." She has a wonderful job with Prudential; she's a stock broker. She just changed from Merrill Lynch over to Prudential.

Stores Carrying Stocksdale Bowls

Nathan: We might pick you up right after the war again and through the fifties, when you were turning your interest into a livelihood. Would that be about the way you'd see it?

Stocksdale: Yes, it was. I had pretty much determined that while I was in the C.O. camp. Gump's had indicated that they would take most anything I made, and then after Gump's, they turned me on to several really big-time stores, like Bullock's, and Carson

Pirie Scott in Chicago, and J. L. Hudson. In New York it was Georg Jensen, and Bonniers--

Nathan: What was that?

Stocksdale: [spells] It was, I think, Danish origin. In fact, it's the only time that I ever had a buyer come up to my house in a chauffeur-driven limousine, and the chauffeur waited out in front. [laughter] Everybody on the street was amazed at that -- [laughter] And now they get used to the big vans and buses that come up with thirty and forty people.

Nathan: That's really amazing how that happens. Did you have an agent or anyone who helped you place your work for sale?

Stocksdale: No, I never did have, and Gump's always wanted an exclusive with me, but I never would give them an exclusive. So when Fraser's came along, why, I started selling to them right away. The neat thing about that was that Gump's was mostly interested in salad bowls, and occasionally large trays, serving trays, but they weren't interested in the small decorative bowls, which I love to make, and Fraser's were. So it was an ideal arrangement. I sold the small decorative bowls and small things to Fraser's, and salad bowls to Gump's. I did that for a number of years.

[I still get many former customers of Fraser's who still collect my work. Among them are Bob Anderson and Forrest Merrill. Merrill is still collecting pieces, but I will not sell to Anderson since he refused to loan a piece for our traveling show in 1993-96.

Jonathan Fairbanks, the curator of American Decorative Arts and Sculpture in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts is a very good friend and has bought several pieces for himself as well as for the museum.]

Developing Collectors

Nathan: So you were able to find out what the consumers wanted, and then you were able to do what they told you?

Stocksdale: Yes, and of course, Fraser's developed a string of collectors who bought my things. Whenever I'd bring in a bunch of things, then they'd call their collectors. I always have kept my prices pretty well down to where I thought they would sell.

I didn't want to gouge the public; never did, never will. So for that reason, I was able to sell through stores like Fraser's and Gump's.

Eventually, why, Fraser's went out of business, and then Gump's went sort of downhill, so I quit selling to them, too. Then I didn't need their business really, because I could sell to collectors; I had a string of collectors that would come right to my house. And so the collectors would keep me busy.

Nathan: It says a lot for the quality you maintained. Were there any individuals at that time who helped you figure out what was needed? Were there buyers or collectors or others who would perhaps talk it over with you?

Stocksdale: No, no, I don't know that there was. The buyer at Fraser's was a close friend of mine. She's still living here, lives up on Panoramic Way. That's Fran McKinnon. [spells] She went to New York for a while away from Fraser's to sell Gordon Fraser's line of flatware mostly, knives and forks and that sort of thing. She had an office in New York there for a while. So we were going to New York, and I took a box of my things along, and she arranged for me to go and see a few buyers and people like that in New York. That was nice.

Nathan: When you bring something to a possible collector, what happens? Do you just set your things out and sit back and see?

Stocksdale: Pretty much.

Nathan: [laughs] I couldn't see you twisting any arms once you got there.

The Story of the Wood

Stocksdale: No, but of course, a lot of the different woods in the bowls, you know, have a story, and so I was able to tell a story about how I acquired the piece of wood and that sort of thing. So that way, it would make the pieces more valuable sometimes.

Nathan: Did people ask questions about durability or any other kind of practical questions like that?

Stocksdale: Well, some people would think that the decorative bowls could be used to put ketchup in them or something. [laughter] Then

when I'd tell them the price, why, they--[laughter] they'd change their minds. But actually, I remember one time I had sold a decorative piece of grey English harewood to Gump's. [They sold it to a customer, who brought it back a few years later and said that at a party in his house, someone had used the bowl for an ashtray. I took the burned spot out by mounting it on the lathe and sanding the area a bit more.] (walks away from microphone) This piece has turned sort of green with age, because I made that probably forty, forty-five years ago.

Nathan: Now, just so we have it on the tape, it's H-A-R-E.

Stocksdale: Yes, from the Earl of Harewood.

Nathan: I see. This looks like a flat plate to me. Or would you call it a platter?

Stocksdale: Yes, a platter.

Nathan: There are so many different things to see in this wood. Could you describe it a bit?

Stocksdale: Yes. In this light part in the center, this streak through here is kind of hard, I guess, and this wood has been impregnated with a chemical, not a dye but a chemical. I don't know the name of the chemical, but the chemical turned it this silver grey color.

Nathan: Did you put the chemical on it?

Stocksdale: No. It was done in England, actually. They do it under pressure. They saw the wood into boards first, and then they put it in a vat where they can put pressure. Maybe they draw a vacuum first and then put pressure on, so you get complete penetration, but in this particular piece they didn't get the complete penetration.

Nathan: The streak runs right across the middle.

Stocksdale: And this is the natural color of the wood.

Nathan: Sort of a light tan.

What is this plate? Is it a different wood?

Stocksdale: In England, it's called sycamore, English sycamore. It's in the maple family, and it's very similar to the eastern hard maple. [lots of bumping and banging noises]

Nathan: Right, now, going the other way, let's say horizontally, there are sort of indistinct and irregular darker markings. What made that?

Stocksdale: That's the nature of this particular wood. And quite often, it has that ripple in it. That is pretty common with this particular wood. I have a piece down in the shop that is the light color all the way through, and I've never turned it, but I've had it for as long as I've had this plate. I just keep it.

Nathan: And how old is this plate, did you say?

Stocksdale: I'd say it's forty years old. Because I've refinished it a couple of times. I send it out for exhibitions sometimes.

Nathan: When you refinish it, what does that involve?

Stocksdale: Oh, it's a very simple process. I just wash the old finish off with lacquer thinner, and it scrubs right off. Then I put another coat of finish on it. Three coats, actually.

Nathan: Now, you're showing me the underneath side, and what do you call this? Would this be the base?

Stocksdale: Yes, the base or the foot, the foot of the piece. See, it was stuck up against something in some show.

Nathan: Right. Now, before you actually started to create this piece, what was the shape of the piece of wood?

Stocksdale: It was one inch thick, and it was a board, just a plain board. One inch thick, and about twelve inches wide, I guess, maybe a little more. It was long, and this was the only part that had this marking in it. The rest of it was just like this all the way through. So I saved this piece, and I sold the others.

Nathan: How many did you get out of a one-inch-thick board?

Stocksdale: Oh, this, I probably got only three or four. It wasn't a very long board. Anyway, Gump's had a bowl from a two-inch piece, just a little bowl, and they sold it right away to somebody, and they went to this person's home, and later on, the person brought it back. This is the one I told you about: somebody had used it for an ashtray. So I never sold them any more.

Giving Demonstrations

Nathan: I noticed that in 1952, you were demonstrating and giving an exhibit at the Los Angeles County Fair. How did you meet Sam Maloof, with whom you exhibited?

Stocksdale: He was a demonstrator too at the same fair. We had booths right side by each, and so I got acquainted with him there. In fact, I went down there and was there to see the exhibition in the art show. A lot of his furniture was on display there, in another part of the place. I heard this lady (Alfreda, Maloof's wife) say, "A shoemaker's children--." You know the shoemaker story? [She said it because she had only a limited amount of furniture.]

Nathan: Yes, the children go barefoot?

Stocksdale: Yes. [laughter] And I turned around and I said, "You must be Sam Maloof." Sure enough, it was. [laughter] So we became very close friends, and when I was demonstrating there, I'd stay at his house and drive back and forth to Pomona.

##

Nathan: Were you ever tempted to do more with furniture? Thinking of Sam Maloof, for example, has that kind of work ever appealed to you?

Stocksdale: No, I thought of it, but for one thing, it takes a bigger shop than what I have here, and I didn't intend to move the shop. But the main thing was that I just didn't have the design ability to come up with ideas for furniture. It just didn't appeal. I've made a few pieces of furniture, like the coffee table and the big credenza there, and the magazine rack behind you, and things like that.

Nathan: Well, you had some pretty good designs in your head. Those are beautiful.

Stocksdale: Thank you. [laughs] Most of them are copies from other people's furniture.

VI FASCINATION WITH WOODS OF THE WORLD

Nathan: But somehow, the bowls and earlier the platters seemed to attract you?

International Wood Collectors Society

Stocksdale: Yes. See, I have a fascination for the different woods of the world, and so one of the big helps in my career was to be a member of the International Wood Collectors Society, IWCS.

Nathan: How early did you join that group?

Stocksdale: Oh, quite early. I think shortly after I got out of the C.O. camp, why, I heard of them through a dealer of rare and fancy woods in Los Angeles, who I got acquainted with during the C.O. days. I would go down to Los Angeles once in a while. I'd go down mostly because somebody living down there had an extra seat in their car, and I would ride down. The Quakers down there had a house that you could stay in for free, so that helped. So I would go down, and then I'd go to these dealers and get acquainted with them, and maybe buy a little wood to do turning and that sort of thing.

Samples, Dealers, and Membership Catalogs

Stocksdale: I met some people through the Tropical Hardwood Company, I think that was the name. They had a string of people as members of the International Wood Collectors Society as their customers. They would come in and buy just little bits and pieces of wood sometimes, enough to make a standard sample, which was only three inches wide, a half inch thick, and six

inches long. That was a standard sample for the International Wood Collectors Society. Some members had as many as 5,000 different woods, all that size.

I never, hardly ever, made a sample. But I would buy and sometimes sell wood to these other members to make samples sometimes; if I got a piece of wood that just wouldn't make a very good plate or tray or bowl, why then, if it was a rare piece of wood, I'd sell it to somebody making samples.

There is this fellow down in Bastrop, Louisiana, [spells]. He's still living. I'll show you a sample of their bulletin.

Nathan: Oh, interesting.

Stocksdale: He sells samples [wanders away from microphone] that's all he does. He was a retired chief executive of Stouffer Chemical Company.

Nathan: I see you're going through some folders to see if you can find a list of people who are interested in samples.

Stocksdale: Here's a list of wood that this guy has to sell. These are from South America.

Nathan: There must be dozens of these, just in this one listing.

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: The names go into a drawing, and so you have to draw lots for his wood?

Stocksdale: Yes, that's the fund raiser, the annual auction of wood that they sell. I hardly ever find anything in that list that I can use. For example, here's Art Green in Bastrop, Louisiana. That's his wood. Now, that's only a partial list of the woods that he has.

Nathan: Oh. He must have thousands of varieties.

Stocksdale: He does, yes.

Nathan: It's a whole world.

Stocksdale: Yes. [laughs]

Nathan: Well, when you come back and sit down at the table again, I'm going to ask you whether you are a member of the International Wood Collectors Society. This is literally international?

Stocksdale: [returns to table] Yes, they've got members all over the world, actually. At the time I joined, I was member number 547. And now they're up in the 6,000 members. So I got their catalog of membership--the membership catalog here--[leaves again]

Nathan: Well, I'll just say on the tape that you're going over to a desk to find the membership catalog that has now about 6,000 entries. Let's see if I can find Stocksdale.

Stocksdale: [returns, laughs]

Nathan: There you are. Bob and Kay. Interests: T. What does interests with the letter T mean?

Stocksdale: Turning. [wood turning] They have kind of double index, so if you have the name of somebody and you don't know where they live, you can look up in the index there and it will tell you what country or what state they live in, and quite often, they have the phone number even of the members.

Nathan: This must be a place where there are meetings, and I'm going to close this by saying the 1996 meeting is in Purgatory, Colorado. [laughter]

Stocksdale: Right. [laughter] Yes, they made a big thing about that. They tried their darnedest to get me to come to it, because I'm one of the oldest members now. You see. I don't think there's more than a dozen members that are older or have been members longer than I have.

Nathan: Yes. I see it's so well organized, there's a constitution, bylaws.

Buying Collections of Wood

Stocksdale: Yes. But getting back to the membership, I bought out two of the members' collections of wood at an early time, shortly after I got out of the C.O. camp. They both lived in Los Angeles and I had visited them on different occasions, and so I was well acquainted with them. The first one was a fellow

who wanted to go to Hawaii and live as a hermit, actually. He had in mind to live out in the woods in Hawaii.

He had this wonderful, wonderful collection of wood, usable pieces, now; they weren't samples. He didn't have any samples, but he literally had tons of wood. He sold it to me at just what he paid for it. If he didn't pay anything for it, he just gave it to me. So for less than $1,000, I got the whole collection of wood.

Nathan: Were these in various shapes?

Stocksdale: Various shapes, anything. Not only were there sometimes logs, but sometimes boards or timbers, or thick pieces you could make bowls out of. I know I have more than one board downstairs that came from his collection.

Nathan: Are the different woods labeled, so you know what they are when you buy them?

Stocksdale: They were labeled, and so I knew. He had them labeled. Now, his source of supply was that Tropical Hardwood Company, except that he also followed where they were building all those freeways there in Los Angeles. Whenever they would go through a garden or yard or something like that and take all the trees out, he would go in and take the trees sometimes, if he thought he could use them. So he had a stack of black walnut that was six feet high, and they were boards [of random sample widths and lengths, slabs mostly three inches thick.]

This dining tabletop is from one of them. For this tabletop, I sliced the board in two and opened it up for the center section from this line over to that line. These two boards--this one and that one--they're what's called book match. You open them up like a book.

Nathan: Oh, I see; they're so beautifully marked.

Stocksdale: And it's beautiful grain pattern, you see. And then the other wood here is some other pieces from the same pile. I gave more than half of that pile to Sam Maloof, because it didn't cost me anything, and I didn't need that much wood, and so I just gave it to him. And that's how I get these chairs. [laughter]

Nathan: Oh, these marvelous chairs, yes. I run my hands on the arm rests and they feel like satin.

Stocksdale: These chairs are worth about $6,000 apiece now.

Nathan: I feel embarrassed to sit on them, but they're beautiful.

Stocksdale: At the time I got them, of course, they were only around $500. [laughter]

Nathan: It's kind of wonderful to see how something natural like wood is prized. So there's a lot of swapping and buying and selling of wood?

Stocksdale: Yes. And then the other fellow, I bought his collection out. He lived there in L.A. too, and he went to the same source. He was very selective. He didn't get any of the freeway wood or anything like that, so his collection wasn't as big, but it sure was quality. Boy, he had some magnificent wood.

Nathan: And was he just ending his production?

Stocksdale: Yes, he was getting along in years, so he wanted to see it go to a good source, and he just sold it all to me at what it cost him. I couldn't believe the woods that I got from those two fellows.

Nathan: It is a compliment to you that they wanted you to have it.

Stocksdale: Yes, definitely.

Nathan: Are you still using his wood also?

Stocksdale: Yes, every once in a while. I've got a few boards of his too. They were very meticulous about identification of the wood, too, much more than I am. They knew the Latin name of every board. I don't.

Nathan: Did you ever study botany or whatever the study of wood is called?

Stocksdale: No, I never have.

Nathan: But you picked up what you needed to know.

Stocksdale: Yes, right. So that's the way it worked out.

VII CALIFORNIA DESIGN SHOWS, MUSEUMS, COLLECTIONS

Nathan: Well, it appears that in the mid and late fifties, you were getting into the California Design shows.

Stocksdale: Right, in Pasadena.

Nathan: Oh, I see Pasadena, and then one in Long Beach?

Stocksdale: No, it wasn't Long Beach. [It was the Long Beach Museum of Art that gave me my first one-man show.]

Nathan: Thanks for the correction.

Benefactors, and the Oakland Museum of California

Nathan: Did the Oakland Museum show an interest in your work also?

Stocksdale: Yes, the Oakland Museum, they had purchased a few pieces quite early. Actually, one of the benefactors of the Oakland Museum, a Mrs. Thiel [spells], Yvonne Greer Thiel, bought several of my pieces and gave them to the museum.

Nathan: Oh, that's great.

Stocksdale: Yes. And that was the beginning of their collection of my things. Then later on, why, the biggest bunch was from Norman Anderson in La Jolla. He gave them twenty-four pieces. He is by far my biggest collector.

Nathan: I hope he's still collecting.

Museum in Balboa Park

Stocksdale: Occasionally. Not so much now. Anyway, I should really call him and talk to him, because he donated a few pieces to the Mingei International Folk Art Museum, the new museum down in Balboa Park that we went to the opening of, but we didn't get to see him. He's not a very social sort of a guy. He doesn't like to go to openings and that sort of thing, although he's a teacher of psychology at the university down in La Jolla, and I guess a very fine teacher. I can't imagine him being a teacher, he's so shy. But I've talked to other people on the faculty down there, and they say that of all the people they would like to study under for a while, Norman Anderson is the one. He's written several books on psychology. He's a bachelor, and he takes these big hikes in the mountains, in the Sierras. So at the time of the opening, I think he was away for the summer on some big long hike, because I tried to get him several times before we went down, and couldn't get hold of him.

Nathan: Well, he obviously has developed his aesthetic taste.

Stocksdale: Yes.

Platters, Salad Bowls, Decorative Bowls

Nathan: A question for you, if you want to talk about it: a man named Samuel Hevenrich wrote a book on new home furnishings in the fifties. It was like a catalog. I found your work under "accessories." He was seeing these beautiful bowls and platters as home accessories, for use. I gather the emphasis for that would be on utility, rather than as art pieces?

Stocksdale: Yes, maybe for the salad bowl sort of thing, and serving trays. Yes.

Nathan: So in a way, have you tended to move away from that utilitarian emphasis?

Stocksdale: Yes, I have.

Nathan: That bowl for ketchup is not what we want. [laughter]

Stocksdale: Yes, well, I like to make salad bowls, because they're so easy to make, but I don't charge near as much for them as a

decorative bowl, say of the same size. That's because I don't make them thin, don't make any effort to make them thin, I leave them more for utility. Also I put a mineral oil finish on them, which doesn't bring out the grain nearly as much as the lacquer finish that I put on most other pieces. I still make them, because I have Gump's old customers coming to me, and Fraser's old customers coming to me.

So I still make them, and of course, and quite often, I get wood that doesn't lend itself to a decorative bowl as much as to a salad bowl. I got some pistachio down there [in the workshop] now, so I'm going to get a few salad bowls out of it, because it's one of the few woods that looks even better in a salad bowl than it does in a decorative bowl.

Nathan: The character of the wood guides you in a lot of ways?

Stocksdale: Yes. And nobody has a pistachio salad bowl now unless they got it from me, because nobody ever thought of making them one. [laughter]

Nathan: I wondered how important the shows and the catalogues were for people who wanted to find you? Some people, of course, did this by word of mouth?

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: But I found in the Oakland Museum library collection quite a few catalogs and show listings. So I wondered how important that was in developing your clientele?

Stocksdale: Well, it is important. I do get a lot of calls from back East: people are coming out to San Francisco and wonder if they can come over and see what we have, and just out of the blue quite often, people we don't know at all will come. They'll turn out to be good collectors, or maybe they won't buy a thing, just look.

Bowls for the de Young Museum

Nathan: Is there a problem in photographing your work?

Stocksdale: No, I don't think so. I don't have any problem photographing. I just had two pieces that the de Young Museum wants.

Nathan: (Don't go away, because I can't get you on tape if you walk away.) You were saying that the de Young was interested in some bowls? These are beautiful.

Stocksdale: These are the two pieces that the curator of the de Young Museum has selected. I showed the curator those two pieces, and I said, "Well, you can have either one of them. They're both about the same price." So he said, "Well, I'd like to have both of them."

Nathan: Oh, yes. How could you choose? Could you describe them for the tape? How would you describe this one? Dark with a lighter rim, and you said it was an ellipse?

Stocksdale: It's an elliptical rim on the top. It's natural edge from the log with the sapwood all the way around the rim.

Nathan: What kind of wood is it?

Stocksdale: This is the African blackwood that they make clarinets out of.

Nathan: Oh, that was the music tree I think you mentioned.

Stocksdale: Yes, the tree of music. Mpingo is the African name of the wood.

Nathan: Tree of music.

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: I hope we can get a copy of that picture to put in your memoir.

Stocksdale: Oh, yes, sure.

Nathan: And then this one.

Stocksdale: This one is turned a different way in the piece of wood. Now, in one bowl, the center of the tree here was way up here, while in the other, the center of the tree here was down here.

Nathan: Oh, I see. One was vertical and one was more horizontal.

Stocksdale: And so the center here, and then the sapwood, see, is over here and here. It went on around like this.

Nathan: Yes. Now, this one looks thinner. Is it thinner?

Stocksdale: Yes, it's thinner than this one a little bit, but not a whole lot.

Nathan: And this is--it almost looks like tortoise shell color.

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: And what kind of wood is this?

Stocksdale: That's lignum vitae. See, I had this, I made this in 1984. I never put a price on it because I liked it so well. I used it in exhibitions and so on, and so then I decided that if anybody should have it, the de Young should have it, so that's why I put it up for sale.

Nathan: Those are just astonishing.

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: Had you dealt with the de Young before?

Stocksdale: Never. No, never had a piece in it. One time at a party, I met Harry Parker, who was the director, Harry Parker III. He knew of my work, and so I said, "Well, I'd like to have you get something for the museum." He said, "Well, I'm sure interested." But it never happened because he's in charge of all the museums, I think, and so he is just too busy, plus the fact that they're thinking of tearing down the de Young and rebuilding it into a bigger and better museum.

So this assistant or assistant curator, I guess his title was, he called me out of the blue one time and said he wanted to come over, and I said "Fine, come on over." He said, "Well, how do I get there?"

Nathan: [laughter] In Berkeley?

Stocksdale: I said, "Well, you got a car?" He said, "No, I'm coming by BART." So I said, "Well, you come by BART and I'll pick you up at the Ashby station." He came over, and chose the two bowls.

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[World Wood Turning Center

Stocksdale: Back in the 70's Albert Le Coff organized wood-turning symposia; the first one was in 1976. He is the head of the World Wood Turning Center in Philadelphia. I am an honorary member of the Center, which has a small collection of my work, especially early work. They probably have a dozen pieces or so.]

VIII COMMISSIONS

Finding the Right Wood for Salad Bowls

Nathan: Do you do work on commission?

Stocksdale: Hardly ever.

Once in a great while, people will tell me they want a big salad bowl, or a special salad bowl, and then I'll make an effort to make it up for them, if they're good friends. So right now, I've got a commission to make a cherry salad bowl, and this will be Eastern wild cherry or choke cherry. I made the customer a cherry bowl, but I got the cherry from Texas, and being from Texas, it's big enough to make a salad bowl. So I made it, and then they had it for a number of years, and had it on top of their refrigerator. The lady was getting something out of the cupboard above the refrigerator, she slipped and fell on the bowl and then on the floor, and landed on the bowl, and broke her leg, and was laid up for several months. And finally, she came to me again with this crushed bowl and wanted to know if I would put back together. [laughter]

Nathan: And can you?

Stocksdale: I could, I think I could have put it back together, but I explained to her that the condition of my eyes--having four things wrong with my eyes--and she went back and told her husband. He said, "Oh, let's have him make another bowl."

Nathan: And you could do it?

Stocksdale: And I could do it. This is the fellow that owns Top Dog here in Berkeley. He's got several Top Dogs now all over the

place. He has property up in Oregon, and he said, "Well, I had some cherry up in Oregon, and wait until I go up there. Here's five hundred bucks retainer." [laughter]

Nathan: You cannot say no to people like that.

Stocksdale: Well, he got up there, and he called me from Oregon, and he said, "No, we don't have anything big enough up here." I said, "Okay, I can get you the wood." So I called Indiana. I got connections there, you see, friends and members of the International Wood Collectors Society, and they're listed right there in the book. So I called one fellow that I know real well; he used to live here in Fremont, and I knew him before he moved. So he said, "No, I don't have any cherry that big, but you call Don Pierce down in Brazil, Indiana. He's got a sawmill, and he probably can get it for you."

Nathan: How big a piece did you need for this project?

Stocksdale: Well, he wanted a fourteen-inch-diameter piece six inches deep, you see. So that takes a pretty big piece of wood, because you don't want to include the center of the tree in it, so it has to be off from the center of the tree.

Nathan: Why do you not want the center of the tree?

Stocksdale: Well, the center of the tree, usually on cherry and a lot of the woods, has radiating cracks that go out from it, and so you've got to eliminate that center. The only wood in the world that I know of that always has a good center of the tree is macadamia. I have never seen a radiating crack in the macadamia, as long as I've been working it.

Anyway, this fellow in Brazil, Indiana, said, "Well, I don't have any. Let me look around." He looked around, and he called me back a few days later and he said, "I've got a cherry tree that I'm going to cut down, and when I cut it down, I'll send you a piece the size you want." So that's what I'm waiting on now. Meanwhile, I've got the five hundred bucks. [laughter]

Nathan: These are such great stories. The network of people looking around, trying to find the right wood.

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: Do you ever locate wood for other people? Are you called upon ever to do that?

Stocksdale: No, no, I don't.

Nathan: Well, that's good, because it sounds like a lot of time to do the job.

Stocksdale: Yes.

Trays for Sister Cities and for Finland's President

Nathan: I noticed some reference to a commission that you had for a large tray for the president of Finland. How did that come about?

Stocksdale: Well, the lady here in town--let's see, she knew me somehow or other, maybe through the Arts and Crafts Co-op, I don't know. Maybe through the co-op, because the Finns are great co-op people, you know. I had made a large tray for the co-op to give to the sister co-op in Japan, and I made another one for the sister city of Berkeley. So anyway, she came to me and said that the president of Finland was coming to a big dinner, and wondered if I could make a redwood burl tray/plate, large, and she wanted a gold inset in it with an inscription. I have a picture of it someplace, but not big enough to read the inscription. Anyway, I found a big piece of redwood burl and made the piece, and then went to the jeweler down here and got him to make up a disk of 14 karat gold. I think it was two and a half or three inch diameter, for the center, and set it in. So that was for the president of Finland.

My wife and I were invited to the dinner at the Fairmont in the Gold Room, I think, or whatever the fancy room is, and all the Finns were there.

Nathan: Really? How big was this tray?

Stocksdale: It was about twenty inches in diameter. Yes, it was pretty good size. And it was a nice tray. Should I go on about this story? Because it's quite a story.

Nathan: Yes. Let's have it.

Stocksdale: [laughs] Okay. It was in this elegant dining room, you know, and this lady was at our table, and she was to make the presentation. There were ten people at each table. We were located just off the stage, near the area where the servants brought in the food from the kitchen. They had wine and everything. The fellow that was master of ceremonies was a Finn, and he got up and he made a long speech about

everything, about the Finns and so on. He sort of stole her speech about this tray. She was just livid. She said, "That's the damn Finns for you." [laughter]

Okay, the evening went on, and they started serving the food. There was an old man who should have been retired long ago, serving the wine at our table. He was going around pouring the glasses of wine. And then some other waiters were bringing the entrees in on big trays, chicken and gravy or something like this. As he was whizzing around there, pouring wine, he knocked one of the entrees off onto the floor, and [laughs] his feet hit the gravy, went out from under him--he went down, and the wine flew around.

Nathan: [laughter] What an exciting dinner.

Stocksdale: It was like a Mack Sennett comedy, really was. The wine landed on this lady's dress, some of it did. Oh, oh. And so the general manager came out of the kitchen and tried to mop up the wine off of her dress, and took her out in the kitchen, and said, "Just send us a bill. Just whatever it is: we'll buy you a new dress, anything." [laughs] Well, she was supposed to do the presentation. So anyway, she managed to borrow a big stole that covered up the wine spots, and she got up on the stage. That's when the other guy stole her speech, and she stood there like a dummy holding this big tray with her mouth open while he rambled on and on. And all she did was give it to the president. [laughter]

Nathan: Well, I hope she recovered in time. That's memorable, and I'm glad you told me. But she didn't drop your tray, so that was okay.

Stocksdale: No, she didn't drop it. No. She was ready to bust it over his head, though, I know that.

Nathan: Yes. It occurred to me that we're getting into some of your tools and materials; we've already gotten into part of them. Maybe next time, could we go into your workshop, so you can identify those things that you think would be of special interest?

I would just like to ask you if you have time for one more question.

Stocksdale: Sure.

Nathan: Did you know James Prestini?

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: And Mr. Wornick, whose collection is--

Stocksdale: Ron Wornick, yes.

Nathan: It is being gathered for the 1997 Oakland Museum exhibit. Both Prestini and Wornick, in some quotes, appeared to see the lathe as limiting in its abilities. Does it seem so to you?

Stocksdale: Well, I think Ron Wornick is a strict amateur as far as the lathe goes. He has hardly ever done much turning. He's done a lot of collecting, but not so much turning. I've never seen any of his work, as far as turning goes. He's going to have a piece in his show.

Remembering Prestini and His Library

Nathan: And a few of your pieces also.

Stocksdale: Yes, a few. So anyway.

James Prestini went on to greater things. He went into sculpture, you know, and he was a teacher all the way through, from the very beginning. He taught in the Chicago Art Institute, and then came out here and taught up at Cal, and so on. I knew him; I had looked him up there in Chicago one time when we were on a coast-to-coast trip, and had a little visit with him and all. He was not too friendly, you know. But anyway, when he came out here, I'd see him every once in a while, and we'd chat a bit. He's still never come over to my house. He lived right over here on Blake, just walking distance. I'd see him, I'd say, "When are you coming over, Pres?" And he'd say, "I'm on my way, I'm on my way." [laughter]

And then there was a fellow who wanted to write a book about me, and he got to sort of first base. He took a bunch of photographs of me and did an interview. One of the publishing companies sold out, and so they dropped his project like a hot potato. That was the last of that. Then somehow or other, I got a Library of Congress number on that book, and Prestini found out about it. He started pestering me about that book, as to when it was coming out, so he could add it to his library, because he has a fabulous library.

Nathan: He's not still alive, is he?

Stocksdale: No, he died a few years ago. I think his library is still open to the public, but I'm not sure. Anyway, he owned the apartment house that the library is in. It occupies two of the units in the apartment house, the whole thing. I don't know whether it's still there or not. You might look it up in the phone book or see if it's listed. You no doubt see it by appointment, that's all. It's just technical books, mostly.

Nathan: Did that book about you ever take form?

Stocksdale: Never did. And I was so glad that it didn't, after I had seen some of the books that this fellow had published. I didn't see them before, but after I saw them, they were so amateurish that it was just sickening. So it was a great relief that that book never got off the ground.

Nathan: The introduction that Signe Mayfield wrote for the Palo Alto show for you and Kay, what did you think of that?

Stocksdale: Oh, I thought she did a beautiful job.

Nathan: That was magnificent.

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: You did get a good treatment there, a good piece of publication.

Stocksdale: Yes.

IX IN THE BASEMENT WORKSHOP

[Interview 3: August 27, 1996] ##

Nathan: We're downstairs in your workshop now, and you've invited me to put the microphone in a very interesting looking wooden bowl. Can you tell me what kind of wood that is?

Controlling the Drying Process

Stocksdale: Well, that's the wood that you smell all over the shop, really. It's one of the most pungent woods I work with. It's juniper, and I don't work with it very often. A friend brought a little chunk of it to me; he wanted a housewarming gift made from it, and so I am in the process of making it. It's a very easy wood to work, so it will be done in a week or so. It's drying--it's practically dry now.

I put some bands around it, but I really wouldn't need to, I don't think. The bands are to keep it from cracking in the drying process; they're stainless steel plumbers' bands. They use them on the drainpipes in plumbing, that sort of thing. So they're very adjustable, and you can hitch a couple of them together if you want longer ones. I have a couple hundred of these. You can see them hanging up there.

When I get the macadamia wood in, then I use as many bands as I can use on the piece. Sometimes I even cut a notch in the curved area so that I can put a band around that part too. I just can't get enough bands on it, really. If I could cover the whole thing with bands, I would.

Nathan: What makes it difficult to contain in this way? Why does it need so many bands?

Stocksdale: Well, the macadamia wood itself has such a tendency to crack in the drying process that nobody else works it. I'm the only one that works it. Even the wood turners over in Hawaii never mess with macadamia, and here I've got customers from all over the country wanting macadamia bowls.

Nathan: Why do they want macadamia?

Stocksdale: Well, it's so unusual in grain pattern. It has what's called medullary rays in it. Those rays go from the center of the tree towards the outside, and so if you get the center of the tree in the bowl, then you have a sunburst effect on the side of the bowl, you see. You can't do that with hardly any other wood. There's very, very few woods that you can do that with, because it's so rare that you find any wood where the center of the tree is nice and solid, and no radiating cracks out from it. So it's a very unusual wood in that way. Practically all of the macadamia I've ever worked has a good solid center, and there's no cracks in the center area. The thing to do is to keep that piece of wood from opening up towards the center, which it has a tendency to do.

So I try to get the area where the center of the tree is, and I put several bands around that area. That controls it. Those bands, I leave them set right here on the workbench for at least a month. Every day, I never miss a day, right through the weekend and everything, I tighten those bands up.

Nathan: You do that by feel?

Stocksdale: No, I've got a little wrench here, and--there it is, right there. You see, that little wrench just fits on that, and [thumping noise] right there. So that, you just go through all the bands that you have every day, and when it gets to the point where it won't tighten up any more from one day to the next, then you know it's almost dry. Then I can put it on the hood above the kitchen stove and finish drying it up there. That's one of the tricks in getting wood dry.

Nathan: How long does it stay on the hood above the stove?

Stocksdale: Oh, anywhere from ten days to two weeks. It's not critical up there. After a day or so on that hood, with the heat from the stove, then I check it with the wrench and see whether it has shrunk any more. And if it has, then I tighten it up again and make it tight, and check it again the next day until it gets to where it's not shrinking any more. Then I know it's dry.

Nathan: So it's first just air-dried, and then it's with this mild heat.

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: And how did you discover that the hood on the stove was the right place?

Stocksdale: Well, I got to thinking about it. I have a little room over here with a heater in it, and I thought it was kind of a waste of heat. Then I got to thinking that the stove would be ideal, because there's pilot lights in the stove when we're not cooking or anything, and then when we're cooking, there's a lot of moisture comes from the cooking, and that keeps the wood from drying out too fast, you see. It's moisture in the air that helps to cure out the wood, too, along with the heat. So it's a combination of the two. I've known for a long time that the dry kilns, commercial dry kilns, put steam in the dry kiln at first, and that prevents the wood from drying too fast. But it also heats up the interior of the wood so that the moisture comes to the outside of the wood and mixes with the steam. So that's sort of what happens up there, but it's not quite that fast. So it does the same thing.

Nathan: You really prefer your method to the dry kiln?

Stocksdale: Yes. A dry kiln is set for just certain sizes of wood, and not just for anything. While the method I use is quite a bit slower than a dry kiln, I can just put anything I want up there and it will cure out.

The Macadamia Connection

Nathan: You were speaking a little earlier of macadamia wood. Were you actively looking for some pieces?

Stocksdale: Yes, I've had several orders for macadamia for the past at least six months, and I have a fellow in Hawaii that's my regular supplier. He knows a lot of macadamia growers, and when they get a tree that is not producing very well, why, they take it out. They just cut it down and take it out. It's not necessarily dead, but it's just getting to the point where it's not producing enough nuts for the space it's taking. So they take it out.

So he is also, he's kind of an artist. He's an artist-critic, actually. He's written a lot of criticisms of various art shows, especially in Japan, because he lived in Japan for a number of years although he's not Japanese at all. My first introduction to him was when he was writing a criticism of a show that I had in Philadelphia. This was many years ago. He was in the States for a while, and he went to see the show. He gave me a very wonderful criticism of it. I'll give you a copy of it.

Nathan: What is his name, do you want to put it in?

Stocksdale: His name is Amaury St. Gilles [spells].

Nathan: Sounds French.

Stocksdale: French; it is. Actually, I don't think he ever lived in France. His parents were ambassadors to Argentina from some European country, but I don't know which one.

Nathan: What an interesting connection. So you wrote in response to his critique, and then did he write back again to you, is that how you kept in touch?

Stocksdale: We got in touch with one another when he--I just forget where the next time we met. Maybe it was in Hawaii, because he spent a lot of time in Hawaii, too. He lived there for a while. In fact, he's living there now. He has a gallery there that he just opened. He wants us to have a little show when we're over there in December, just before Christmas.

Nathan: Yes. Christmas in Hawaii, that sounds rather wonderful. And does he also have a business of furnishing wood?

Stocksdale: No, only to me. That's why I have so much trouble getting him to function, because he's tied up with other things and other art work, and he knows a lot of artists. He gets the artists to show in his gallery and so on. But I pay him real well for his time and for getting the wood, so it's not because he can make more money doing something else. It's just because he wants to; he's got too many irons in the fire.

He called me just a few days ago and said that, believe it or not, he managed to get a bunch of macadamia wood together, and is ready to ship it and wanted to know my shipping instructions. So I told him just paint the ends of it with white glue or paint, either one, and then just put a piece of paper over it. If you don't want to wait until the stuff dries, why, just cover it with a piece of paper. And

then he'd put it in a carton box and send it by Federal Express, because they are not as fussy as UPS, and they follow through. I get it the next day after it's shipped. So that's pretty fast, from Hawaii.

Nathan: Absolutely. What is the shape of the wood?

Stocksdale: I just tell him to cut it to firewood length.

Nathan: And it's planks?

Stocksdale: They're just logs. So my specifications are, the smallest end, I want at least five inches inside the bark. And then the largest end can be up to eight inches in diameter. It doesn't have to be just that size, but within those two maximum-minimum sizes. Unfortunately, much of the wood was mostly over eight inches in diameter, so I don't know what luck I'll have with it, because it may present more of a problem to work.

But meanwhile, another fellow is anxious to get a bowl of mine, macadamia. I told the gallery that he wanted to get the bowl although I didn't have any wood and I didn't know when I was going to get any wood, so he said, "I'll get you the wood." [laughter] Sure enough, he called me the same day. He said, "I have a friend who has a friend that has a macadamia orchard. What size do you want?" I told him, and I said, "Paint the ends, and just cut it to firewood lengths, and send it. I have another fellow that's my regular supplier, but his wood, it sounds like it's really too big for me. So if you get some, why, you ship it too. I don't want a whole lot, just forty or fifty pounds would be plenty." So I have to watch the UPS or Federal Express.

Nathan: Right. Well, when your friends and acquaintances send you wood, do you simply take it sight unseen?

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: You just take what they send you and then see what you can do with it?

Stocksdale: Right. And sometimes it has a fork in it, which makes an interesting bowl too, because then you get three of those sunburst markings on the bowl instead of two, and so it's kind of interesting. I'm sorry I don't have any macadamia bowls to show you.

Pistachio Wood

Nathan: Fine. Is there any other wood that has certain virtues that you're interested in that maybe is hard to get?

Stocksdale: You know, I don't think so. I get plenty of black walnut for salad bowls. That's the main wood I use for salad bowls, although now I'm getting some pistachio, which is very beautiful.

Nathan: Oh, is that pistachio? [clunking]

Stocksdale: This is a pistachio bowl. I just roughed this out yesterday.

Nathan: Let's see, what color would you call that?

Stocksdale: Well, it's sort of a chartreuse with the black lines in it, you see.

Nathan: Yes. It's very pale.

Stocksdale: Yes, but it darkens a little when I put the finish on, of course. [clunking continues] This is another one here, you see. So the finish makes it look quite a bit different, because salad bowls are just soaked in mineral oil, that's all, the only finish I put on them.

Nathan: You soak it in mineral oil after it's all shaped, and is that the last process?

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: Right, I'll just mention that we're waiting for the truck with your macadamia wood to come. Is this the usual thickness at this stage of bowl preparation?

Stocksdale: It's a little extra thick for that particular wood. This one is a little thinner, you see. So this thicker one will take longer to dry out, that's all.

Nathan: I see one bowl has three metal bands and one has one.

Stocksdale: Yes. Well, it's got a few cracks [moving bowls] and that one has a few more. See there's one down there, yes. But that doesn't show in the inside, you see.

Nathan: No. [thump boom]

Stocksdale: So if it goes oval, a lot of that will turn off, you see. Because that's on the end grain.

Nathan: And by the time these are finished, will they be approximately the same color as they are now? A little darker?

Servers

Stocksdale: They'll be darker. Let's see--oh, I've got one of the servers that's already oiled and everything.

Nathan: I'm going to mention into the microphone that Bob has gone to the small room next to his workshop to bring out the servers that will go with one of these bowls. We're sitting in his main workshop; it has good ceiling light and a couple of windows, and all around the room are various pieces of machinery that I hope he will explain to me. There is a small brick stove with a big pipe. Everything is ready to hand.

Bob, I'm just trying to describe what I see in your workroom. You can give the better names. [Holding up a wooden server] [clunk] This is a beauty, ooh.

Stocksdale: See, that's off the same piece of wood.

Nathan: This is pistachio?

Stocksdale: Yes. And that's the way it looks when you put the oil on it.

Nathan: Oh. You see all sorts of delicate markings. There are big stripes and very subtle little inner stripes. If it's a fork and a spoon server set, this would be the spoon? It's flat and solid.

Stocksdale: Yes. I just make a pair of paddles.

Nathan: Oh, they're both paddles, no fork or spoon. Now, the lucky person who gets this, is there any special care for your wooden paddles and bowls?

Stocksdale: No, I recommend washing them after every use with soap and water, detergent and water. And then just let them drain out. But you don't have to re-oil them or anything like that. They'll go for years without being re-oiled, because a lot of people use olive oil on their salads. So that works really the best.

Nathan: And when you use black walnut, do you make black walnut servers?

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: As I run my fingers down the side of the handle, it's not just a straight line, it's a little shaped in and out.

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: And how did that come about?

Stocksdale: Well, I just worked that out. I've been doing that same shape now for thirty-five, forty years.

Nathan: [laughs] I see.

Stocksdale: The buyer at Gump's when I first took my bowls in there said, "Just make a pair of paddles. We don't want fancy spoon and fork and all that stuff. Just a plain pair of paddles." So that's what I worked out.

Nathan: Right. And about how thick would you say that is?

Stocksdale: About a quarter of an inch, yes.

Nathan: It's very nice to handle.

Stocksdale: Yes. And when I'm making quite a few of them, I figure it takes about seven minutes to make a pair of them. That's all.

Nathan: What machinery do you use to make them?

Stocksdale: Well, I use a band saw to cut out the form, and then the sanders there to sand the form, and then I go back to the band saw. I take a thick piece of wood and saw it to this shape first, and then after I get the contour sanded, then I mark it in quarter-inch markings and then take it back to the band saw and saw it again. I've got two different forms, patterns. Here's the edge pattern--

Nathan: Let's see, this is a piece of--what is this, sheet metal?

Stocksdale: Yes, aluminum. And here is the pattern for the top, you see.

Nathan: Oh, yes.

Stocksdale: If I want shorter ones for smaller bowls like these, why, I just get a mark here, and I just slip it down for the top. Or I can make it longer.

Nathan: This is pistachio, this one?

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: In what shape did it come to you?

Stocksdale: Just a chunk, part of a log.

Nathan: I see, so a cross-piece of a log.

Stocksdale: Yes. And it wasn't a whole log. It was just a chunk of a log. See, here's some that I just sanded--these are the same wood, see, and these are all sanded. This had a little hole in it, so I filled in the hole with epoxy and sanding dust. When that sits overnight, then I'll do the final sanding on it and do the oil. And those two--this is the size.

Nathan: Hello. [tape interruption] Ruth Hardin just came in to drop off a book for Kay, and then left.

Stocksdale: Ruth makes bowls and plates, and she's a very good cellist. She plays cello in trios and quartets and that sort of thing, and quite often for funerals and weddings and whatever.

Nathan: That's a talented woman.

Stocksdale: She was originally a cellist for the San Francisco Symphony, but this was years ago when Pierre Monteux was the conductor, and he kicked her out because she got pregnant. [laughter] So she's never gone back.

Nathan: What a slice of life that is.

Stocksdale: This was forty or fifty years ago. [laughter]

Nathan: Of course. Thank you, that was a very nice little interlude.

Stocksdale: That's the kind of people I have dropping in now and then.

Nathan: That is absolutely great.

Let's say you got this piece of pistachio wood, you hold it in your hands, what do you think? What's the first thing you do?

Stocksdale: When I'm going to make a bowl?

Nathan: Yes.

Getting the Biggest Bowl Out of the Wood

Stocksdale: Well, I see how big a bowl I can get out of the piece.

Nathan: You want the biggest--

Stocksdale: The biggest piece I can get out of it. If it's big enough for a salad bowl, I'll make a salad bowl. If it's not big enough for a salad bowl, then I'll make a small decorative bowl.

##

Nathan: Okay, now let's see. You have just brought in what looks like a half-round piece of wood.

Stocksdale: Half-round, a cross-section of a log, and this is really too small to make very much out of. It will make a small bowl and that's all, because of the end grain here and here, see. So you're limited only to that diameter.

Nathan: Could you make two bowls out of this piece?

Stocksdale: Oh, I could make several bowls out of it, but they would be awfully small, you see.

Nathan: And about how big is that, about eighteen--?

Stocksdale: It's about twelve or thirteen.

Nathan: Twelve or thirteen inches in diameter.

Stocksdale: Yes, but I can't make a bowl on end grain, you see. It has to be with the grain. So this piece is really not very valuable, I'll give it away, probably. See, it's developing some cracks.

Nathan: Yes, and it still has the bark on it.

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: Let's assume that this was a piece from which you could make a larger bowl. Then you would look at it some more?

Cooperation on the Chain Saw

Stocksdale: Yes, and then I would probably decide to do some chain saw work on it, on the chunk, and cut a section out, you see. If it was, say, twelve inches this way, then I'd cut a five-inch section out right down, and the top would be here.

Nathan: I see, and do you have a chain saw here in your workshop?

Stocksdale: I used to, but I traded it for wood.

Nathan: [laughs] I see.

Stocksdale: [A friend of mine, Bob Buscho, is an emergency room doctor at Seton Medical Center in San Francisco. I first met him at Penland School of Crafts in North Carolina, and we have become good friends. He is a would-be woodworker and loves to run the chain saw. He does any sawing I want with his new saw. He comes about once a month for therapy on the saw.]

Nathan: So he does it to your specifications?

Stocksdale: Yes. And I don't have to lift a finger, he just does all the work, lifting the logs and moving them around. It's a good deal. And he says it's a great deal for him too. Because he says it's therapy for him. [laughter] He should pay me $200 an hour. I said, "Any time you want to."

A Circle on the Band Saw

Nathan: That's a great story. Let's say he has done the chain saw work for you, and you now have a smaller hunk of wood.

Stocksdale: A smaller slab, you know. And then I bring it into the shop, and draw a circle on it as big as I can get.

Nathan: Does it have to be a perfect circle?

Stocksdale: Yes, has to be a perfect circle. And then I saw it on the band saw.

Nathan: You have a band saw. Is that what's in the corner?

Stocksdale: Down there. That will saw up to eight inches thick, so it's easy for it to saw a circle like that. Over there on the floor, I've got a piece of black walnut now waiting for somebody to come along and help me get it up to the band saw, because it weighs sixty-five pounds. I used to rassle those up by myself, but I said, "I'm in no hurry. Somebody will come along." I could have gotten Ruth; she would have helped me. [laughter] I'm not in that big a hurry for it. The bowl is already sold, and it's a big one. It's fifteen inches by six inches. It goes to the lady who designed or curated our show, our traveling show, the "Marriage in Form" show. She's from Palo Alto.

Nathan: Right. Signe Mayfield?

Stocksdale: Signe Mayfield.

Nathan: She must be thrilled.

Stocksdale: Yes. So anyway, she commissioned me to make a big bowl, and so I took the biggest chunk of wood I had.

Nathan: All right, let's move over to black walnut, then. You have made it roughly in the shape, a beginning shape that you want. Do you ever find surprises in that wood?

Stocksdale: Oh, occasionally, yes. On some black walnut, occasionally you hit a nail or something like that. That's not good.

Nathan: No. And what do you do in a case like that?

Stocksdale: Oh, there's several things you could do. But there's ways of getting that nail out of there. My band saw will saw right through a nail, but it's not very good for it, and it dulls it quite a bit.

Nathan: So then can you plug the hole that's left?

Stocksdale: Oh, yes, I can plug it. Sometimes I can turn that part off, you know. Depends on where the nail is. But that doesn't happen very often.

Nathan: Is there ever some irregularity that you find rather beautiful so that you can use it?

Stocksdale: Yes, occasionally you find a knot that's really nice to have in the bowl. So it's nice to get those irregularities like that cherry bowl, I think I told you about the cherry bowl that I'm getting a fellow in Indiana--

Nathan: Oh, yes. Choke cherry, is that what it was?

Stocksdale: Yes. And so the customer here in town, Top Dog, [laughter] says he wants a little figure in it, so I called the guy in Indiana and I said, "Well, when you get that tree cut down, saw out a piece that has a little figure in it, either a fork or a knot or something like that, if you can." So he said, "Yeah, I'll do it." [laughs] He hasn't come through yet. But he will.

Nathan: You really learn patience. Now, let's see. That was the band saw in the corner, is that right?

Stocksdale: No, it's over here, right under Kay's picture there.

Lathes, Grinder, Drill Press

Nathan: Oh, I see. And then what's over to the left of it?

Stocksdale: This is a lathe. Yes, that's the lathe that I do most of my turning on. But I've got two other lathes here that do the same thing. One of them is much bigger for big stuff, and I'll put that big bowl on the big lathe over there, because it's got a lot of power, and for the roughing out. The bowl is small enough that it will fit on that lathe over there for the final work, for the final sanding and that sort of thing, because that's the exhaust fan over there. So I just use this at a minimum. This small lathe here, I just use it for finishing up the bases of the decorative bowls.

Nathan: Oh, I see.

Stocksdale: You see there's a little base there? That's to finish up that area. Also, I use that for sanding the lacquer when I put a lacquer finish on a decorative bowl. It's got a very, very slow speed on it, and that does for sanding the lacquer, it doesn't sand very fast.

Nathan: Why would you sand the lacquer?

Stocksdale: Before you put the final coat on, you want a real smooth surface, and usually I strain the final coat of lacquer, too. That's a satin finish lacquer. So I spray it on, and make sure there's no dust in the air, and then I don't have to polish it or do anything to it once the lacquer dries in fifteen minutes. It's very fast.

Nathan: Do you wear any protective mask when you're doing these things that have fumes or dust?

Stocksdale: Well, no, because I've got a big exhaust fan over there where I do my spraying, and it blows it out under the front steps. [laughter]

Nathan: Great. Now, there is a workbench there, and there's an interesting piece of machinery on that.

Stocksdale: Yes, that's my grinder for sharpening the tools. So that's where I sharpen the tools for turning and so on. Just before you came, I sharpened up my turning tools. And there, I drill a hole down to the depth that I want the bowl to be turned. So then I don't have to stop and measure it to see just how deep I'm going, I just turn to the bottom of the hole and I know I'm deep enough.

Nathan: Right. And then there is something that looks as though it has many little drills in it?

Stocksdale: Well, that's the drill bits for the drill press.

Nathan: And is this a brick stove?

Stocksdale: No, that's my trash burner. I burn shavings and any papers or anything like that. I burn in that, mostly in the wintertime for heat. In fact, I had a fire going in it this morning to burn out a bunch of trash.

Wall of Tools

Nathan: Right, and we're at a workbench where there are several bowls, future bowls sitting. Right behind us, how many hand tools have you got there on the wall?

Stocksdale: Some of them I don't use. Some of them are just pure decoration, and they're antique tools, so they're quite valuable, some of them are.

Nathan: I see that Japanese device that marks a straight line?

Stocksdale: Yes, and there's a couple of Japanese saws there, real fine saws. Then there's a bunch of little dental tools up there, see those?

Nathan: Yes.

Stocksdale: I use dental tools more than you think. Here's one here that I use. I just used it to dig out any trash that was in the crack there, so I'd get a good solid wood area for filling in.

Nathan: Oh, right. This is one of those little paddles for the salad bowl you were showing me.

Stocksdale: Yes, it just had a little open crack that went all the way through to both sides. So I just dug out the loose stuff that was inside there with this dental tool. Now, this crack here is opening up to be filled. I can just run that tool right along like that, see, and clean that out and then fill it, you see. It makes a good grip on the tool, and so this is really a good dental tool. But I have other uses for the dental tools too. I have forty or fifty of them I've got from various sources. My dentist gave me this one, and I swear it was brand-new when he gave it to me.

Nathan: That's great. I don't see many tools lying around. Do you make it a point to put your tools back in their right spots?

Stocksdale: I try to, yes. Except this one here, I keep it out on my workbench, because I am always using it.

Nathan: I haven't looked in your adjoining room, but if we look at the corner down here, there's a certain amount of wood stored.

Stocksdale: Yes, there's some small amount of wood there, and a lot of it is for small trays and plates and that sort of thing. There's no salad bowl wood in there at all. It's out in the back, the salad bowl wood is. Because actually I do more decorative bowls than I do salad bowls, but anyway.

Nathan: This is very impressive. (Would you like to stop and move around for a few minutes?)

Stocksdale: Doesn't matter. Do you want to go back upstairs or not?

Nathan: Not quite yet. This is such an interesting work place, and I don't know enough about machinery really to appreciate this room.

Stocksdale: [laughs] Well, it's pretty hard to tell you about it.

Nathan: You're very clear. Is this more equipment than you had when you started?

Stocksdale: Oh, yes. [laughs] Seventy-five years of accumulation.

Nathan: Is there something else you're going to get, more tools?

Stocksdale: No, I don't plan to get anything else. The band saw is my oldest tool here, and it's probably 185 years old. Just from what I know about it, because it was in a little furniture factory close to where I was born, you know.

Nathan: Oh, yes. You mentioned the furniture factory.

Stocksdale: The furniture factory burned down twice, and they just fixed up the band saw, put new rubber on the wheels and new bearings in it, and it's still running. When I got it, I did a lot of work on it too, but I got it fifty years ago. I paid ten dollars for it then. It had no name on it. I have no idea who made it, but it's a darn good band saw.

[Jerry Glaser and the Turning Gouge

Stocksdale: The most important tool that I use is a turning gouge made from a 9/16" rod of tool steel. My very good friend Jerry Glaser and I designed it and Jerry manufactured it. Jerry is a retired head engineer for Garret Air Research. The company has twelve factories in this country, England, and France. Since his retirement he has become "the wood turners' engineer" and has solved many problems for wood turners all over the world. He makes up tools and sends a sample for me to test occasionally.

Jerry came to visit me when I went to England with my first wife, Nan, and our children Joy and Kim in 1967-68. Nan was an exchange teacher with a teacher in Hammersmith. We lived nearby in Chiswick. The kids were in Junior High School (Secondary Modern).

Jerry and I visited many wood importers, and we went to see David Pye and Edward Barnsley, who were probably England's foremost woodworkers at that time. I bought a couple of tons of very fine English Brown Oak for Sam Maloof from Barnsley. We also went to the West Country and got to visit John Makepeace, another very well known woodworker, who established a woodworking school in Parnham House, a stately country manor.]

Hand Tools and Sandpaper

Nathan: Great. Well, at your suggestion, I think we can turn this off and go on upstairs. [tape interruption]

Somewhere I read that you use some hand tools, like a gouge, and some other instruments that a lot of people don't use. Do you have some hand tools that are unique to you?

Stocksdale: Well, no, I think most of the tools that I use are pretty common. Most everybody who makes bowls has to have them. So it's just a matter of how the technique of using the tools differs with the individual. And also the way they're ground, different angles. And then some people scrape the wood, and I make shavings with the gouge. I do a lot with sandpaper, while other people do a lot more work with tools to get a smooth finish. I feel that I can do it faster with coarse sandpaper than I can trying to do it with tools.

Nathan: Is there a machine that handles the sandpaper, or is it just your own hands?

Stocksdale: Just my own hands. I slow the machine down quite a bit for sanding, and then I have what's called a rotary disk sander. It's just a little spinning disk of sandpaper, and I do a lot of the first sanding with that. As it's turning in the lathe at a slow speed, I hold the rotary disk sander up against the bowl and sand that way.

Nathan: So it's your own experience that tells you when it's the way you want it?

Stocksdale: Yes, and so I use, oh, sometimes as many as eight or ten different grits of sandpaper making one bowl. It depends a lot on the hardness of the wood, mostly how hard the wood is. Some woods sand very easily, and other woods are very difficult to sand.

Nathan: Do you like hardness in the wood?

Stocksdale: Yes, I like a hardness in the wood. So I don't have to be real careful with it. [laughter] Really put the pressure on, you know.

Nathan: Do people come to you and want to be your apprentices?

Stocksdale: All the time. All the time.

Nathan: Do you have to beat them off?

Stocksdale: Yes. [laughter]

Nathan: I take it you do not have assistants.

Stocksdale: No.

Nathan: Tell me why.

Stocksdale: Well, I have to spend a lot of my time showing them how to do it, and I don't get anything done. Of course, when the doctor comes over to do my chain-sawing, if I had to chain saw, I could cut it three times as fast as he does it, but he likes to do it. I let him do it.

Nathan: There is something pretty wonderful about the doctor who likes to use a chain saw. I prefer not to think about that. [laughter]

Stocksdale: Yes. Especially from an emergency room. [laughter]

X PERSONAL COLLECTIONS

Brazilian Bird Whistles

Nathan: You have a fine, gruesome sense of humor. [laughter] Was it you who mentioned wooden bird whistles? Is that part of your collection, those of Brazilian rosewood?

Stocksdale: Oh, yes. Do you want to see them?

Nathan: Yes, but first let's talk about them a little. Do they really sound like birds?

Stocksdale: Oh, yes, except that they're Brazilian birds, because the whistles were made in Brazil. [laughter] But some of them, oh, sound like owls and sandpipers and that sort of thing.

Nathan: Do people specialize in bird whistles?

Stocksdale: Well, I got these through Fraser's when Fraser's were selling them. They turned me on to the importer. He was bringing these bird whistles in, so I just bought up a collection of them.

Nathan: Have you ever been tempted to try to make bird whistles?

Stocksdale: No. No, I couldn't begin to make a bird whistle. You want to see them now, or see them later?

Nathan: Maybe we'd better see them later, because I don't like to take your time when I'm not getting you on tape, even though I'd love to do it.

Stocksdale: It's nice to get the bird whistles on tape.

Nathan: Do you want to get a bird whistle and whistle it?

Stocksdale: Yes, I'll get one.

Nathan: Okay, let's do that. [tape interruption] I see you have a box full of whistles. Are those beautiful.

Stocksdale: Brazilian rosewood. They're all--not all of them, but most of them--are made of Brazilian rosewood. And each one has a different sound and tone and everything else. Now, this one is two-toned. If you blow hard, you get both whistles. There's a whistle here and a whistle here. But if you blow low, you just get this whistle like this. [whistles, low and then hard]

Nathan: That is remarkable.

Stocksdale: Isn't that beautiful?

Nathan: It is beautiful. How many of these do you have? This is a whole collection.

Stocksdale: Oh, I've got probably twenty in here. And here is a gem. This is a gem, this one here. See, it's got a little pulley, and makes a little thing flutter in there. [whistles, trilling]

Nathan: Oh, that is absolutely lovely.

Stocksdale: They don't make these any more.

Nathan: It must take a lot of skill.

Stocksdale: Oh, yes. And this is a beauty too. [whistles, like the last one]

Nathan: You just touched something that vibrated.

Stocksdale: Just pluck that little--[whistles] Now, here's one that sounds sort of like an owl.

Nathan: Mm, it's a little bigger and longer.

Stocksdale: [whistles, owlish] Here's another one.

One-Way Spinners

Nathan: I think I'm going to stop a moment [tape interruption, resumes with whistles]. We had a demonstration of a number of bird whistles, and also mysterious pieces of wood that can be spun to the left but will not allow themselves to be spun to the right. They judder but they don't spin. It's a box full of little wonders. [tape interruption] You're putting these beautiful bird whistles away. You said it didn't take long to figure out shortcuts in making them?

Stocksdale: To figure out shortcuts, and also the quality of the bird whistles plummeted down until they just weren't any good at all. The finish was terrible, the wood selection was terrible, and they didn't do nearly as good a job of turning and designing the whistles. So the next ones that came along just weren't any good at all.

Nathan: Do you think it's a lost art?

Stocksdale: Well, yes, I think it is sort of a lost art. Here's another interesting bit of wood turning.

Nathan: That looks like a round box, with two identical halves. [pause] We're looking at the shapes and sizes of these beautiful pieces of work, some with fluttering panels and beads inside.

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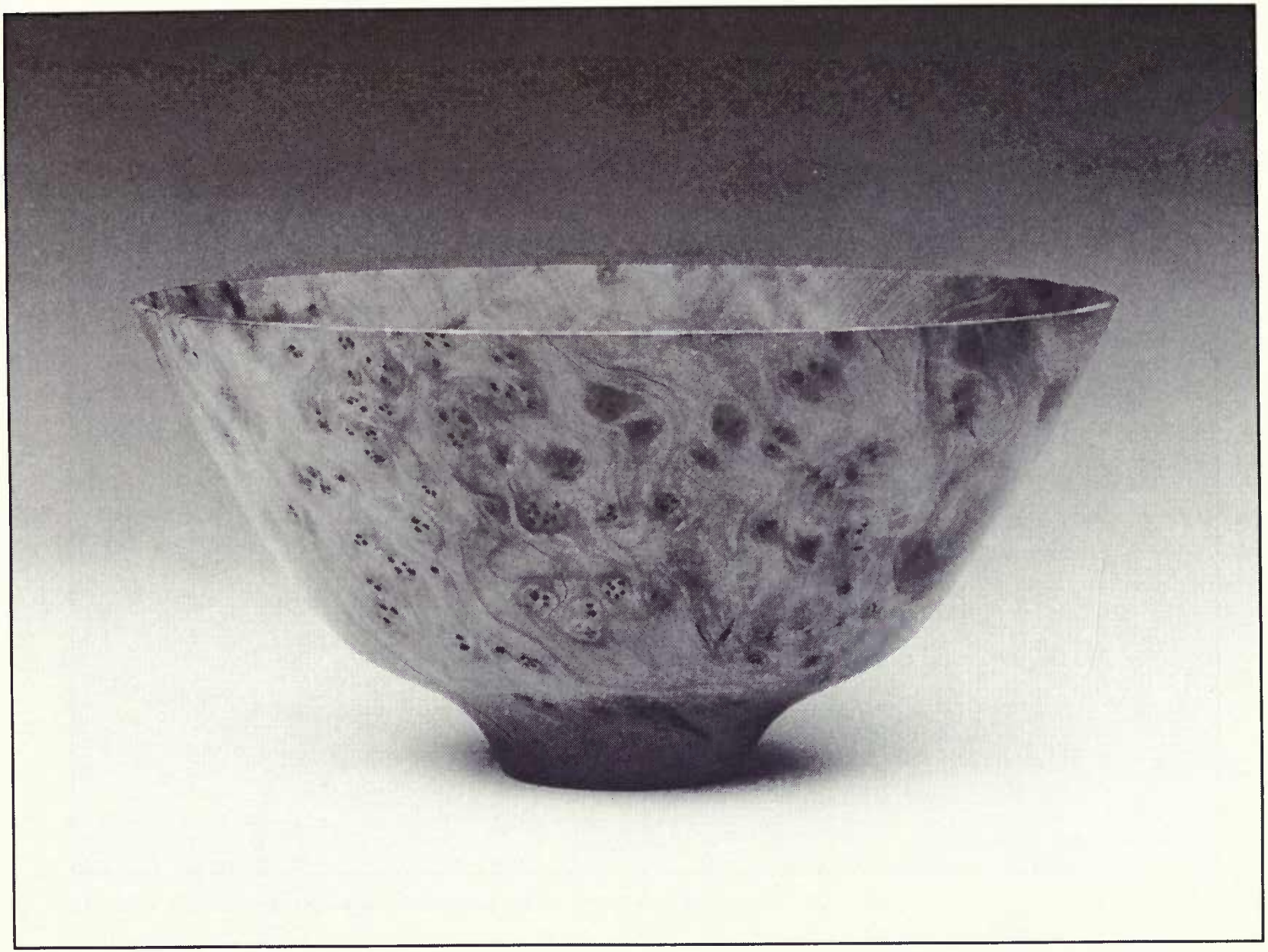
Bob Stocksdale wood turning, with lathe, early 1950s.

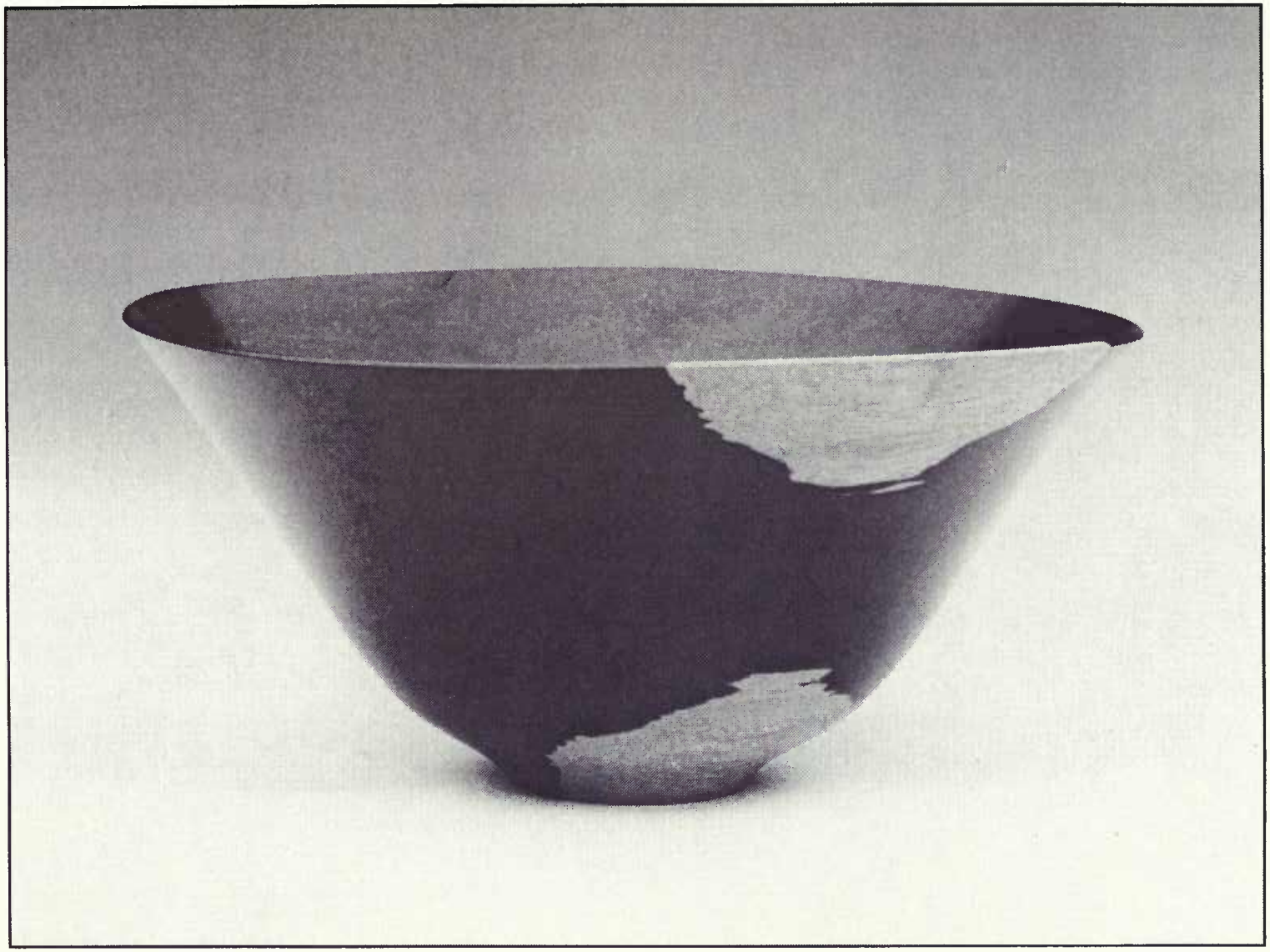
Bob Stocksdale and Kay Sekimachi at home with their work.

Photograph © 1992 Tom Grotta, courtesy Brown/Grotta Gallery.



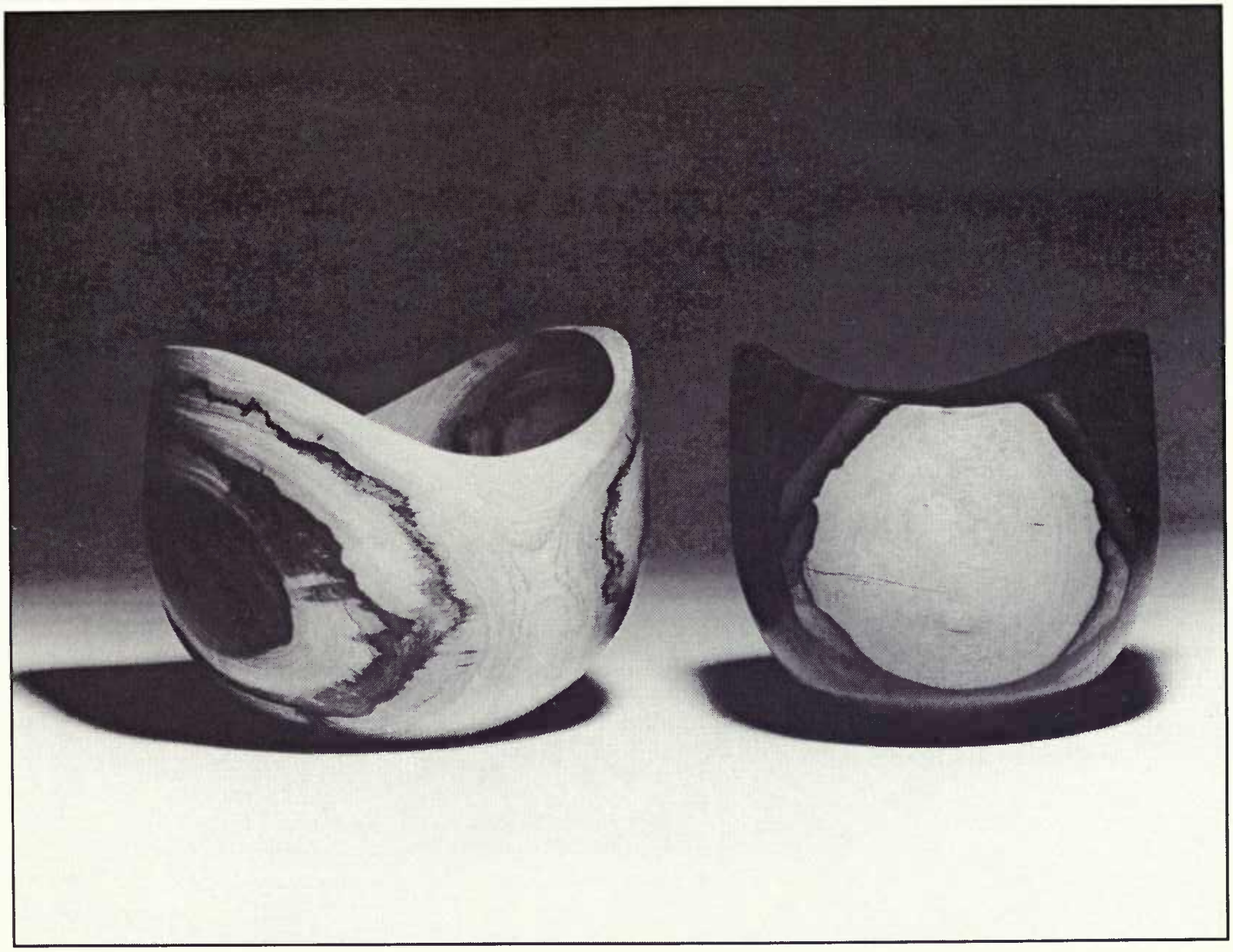
Thuya burl bowl (Morocco), Bob Stocksdale. 4.75" (H) x 9.5" (D), 1991.

Photograph © 1992 Tom Grotta, courtesy Brown/Grotta Gallery.



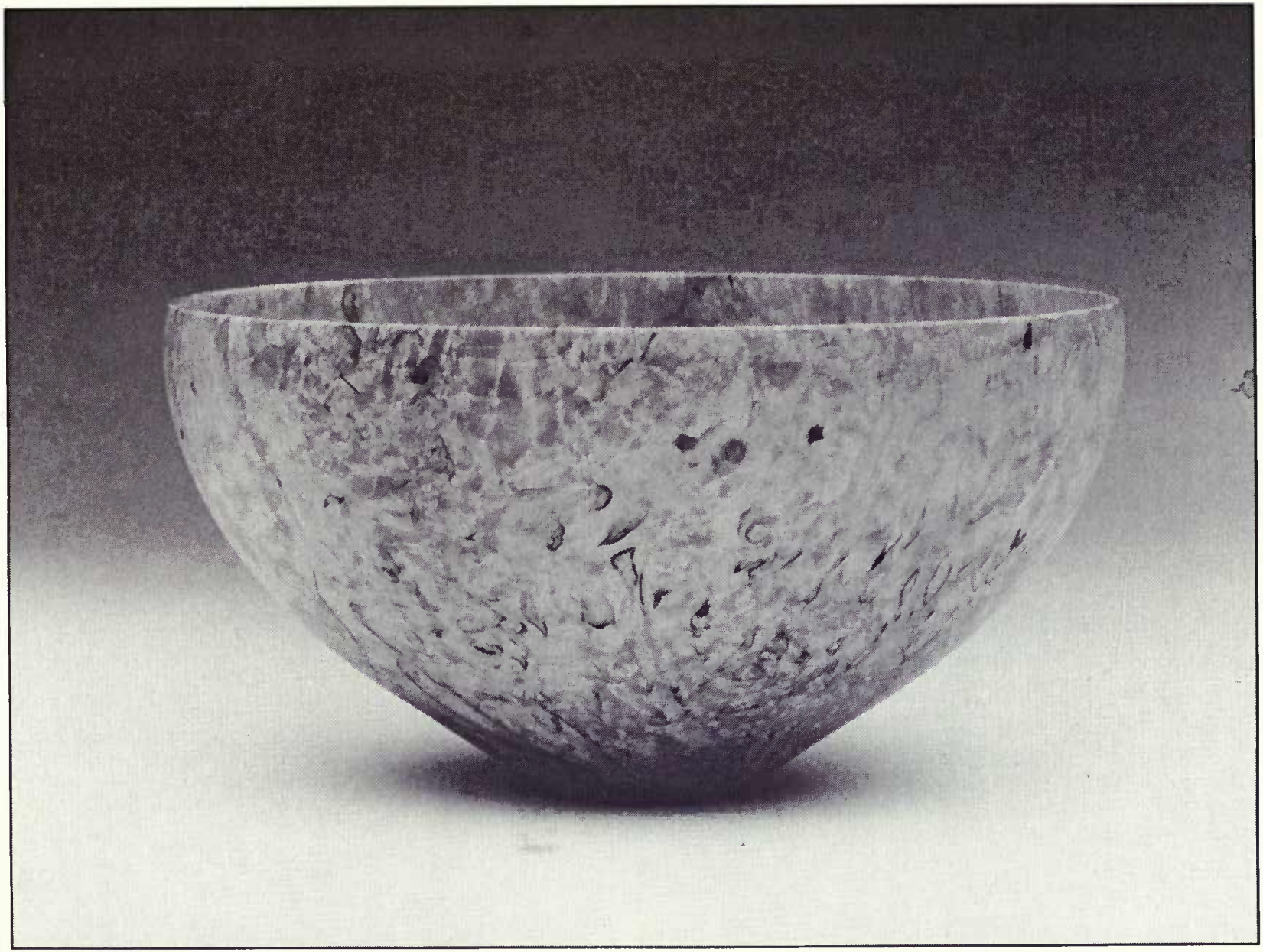
African blackwood (mpingo) (Africa), Bob Stocksdale. 4" x 7".

Photograph by Christopher Dube



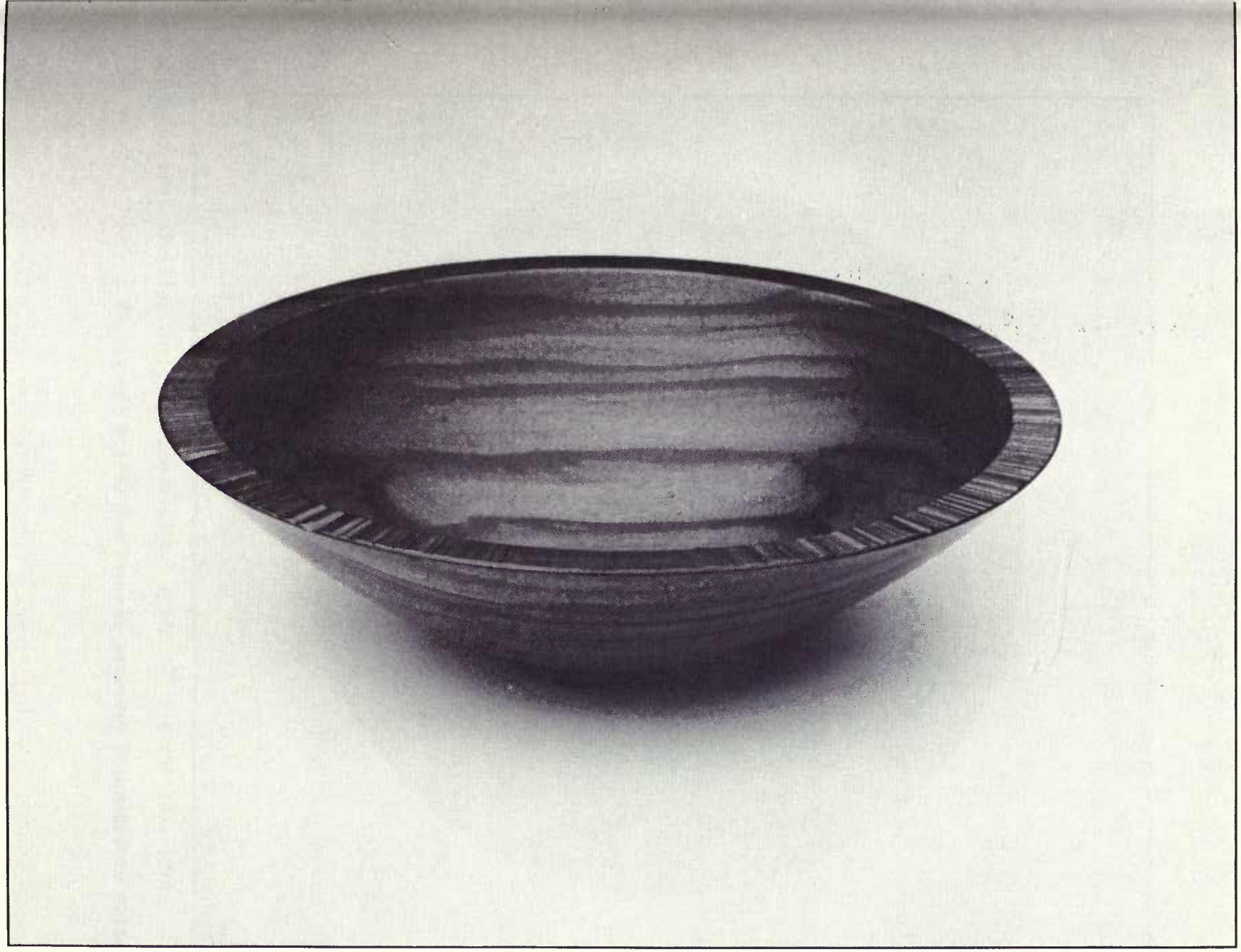
Bob Stocksdale wood bowls. Left: Lignum vitae (Nicaragua), 6 1/4" (H) x 7 1/4" (D); right: Ebony (Malaysia), 6" (H) x 6" (D), 1991.

Photograph © 1992 Tom Grotta, courtesy Brown/Grotta Gallery.



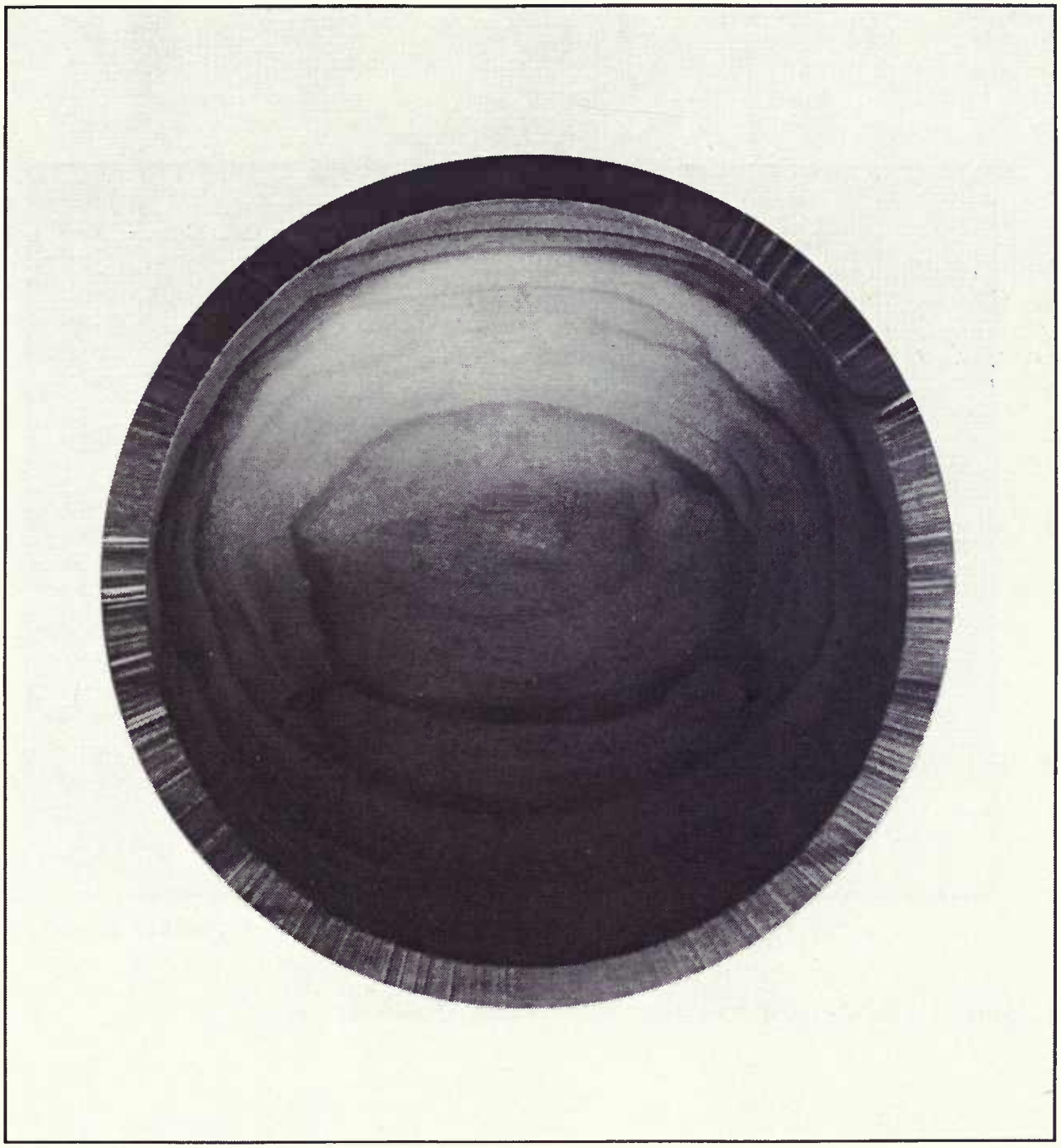
Masur birch bowl (Russia), Bob Stocksdale. 3.5" (H) x 7" (D), 1992.

Photograph © 1992 Tom Grotta, courtesy Brown/Grotta Gallery.



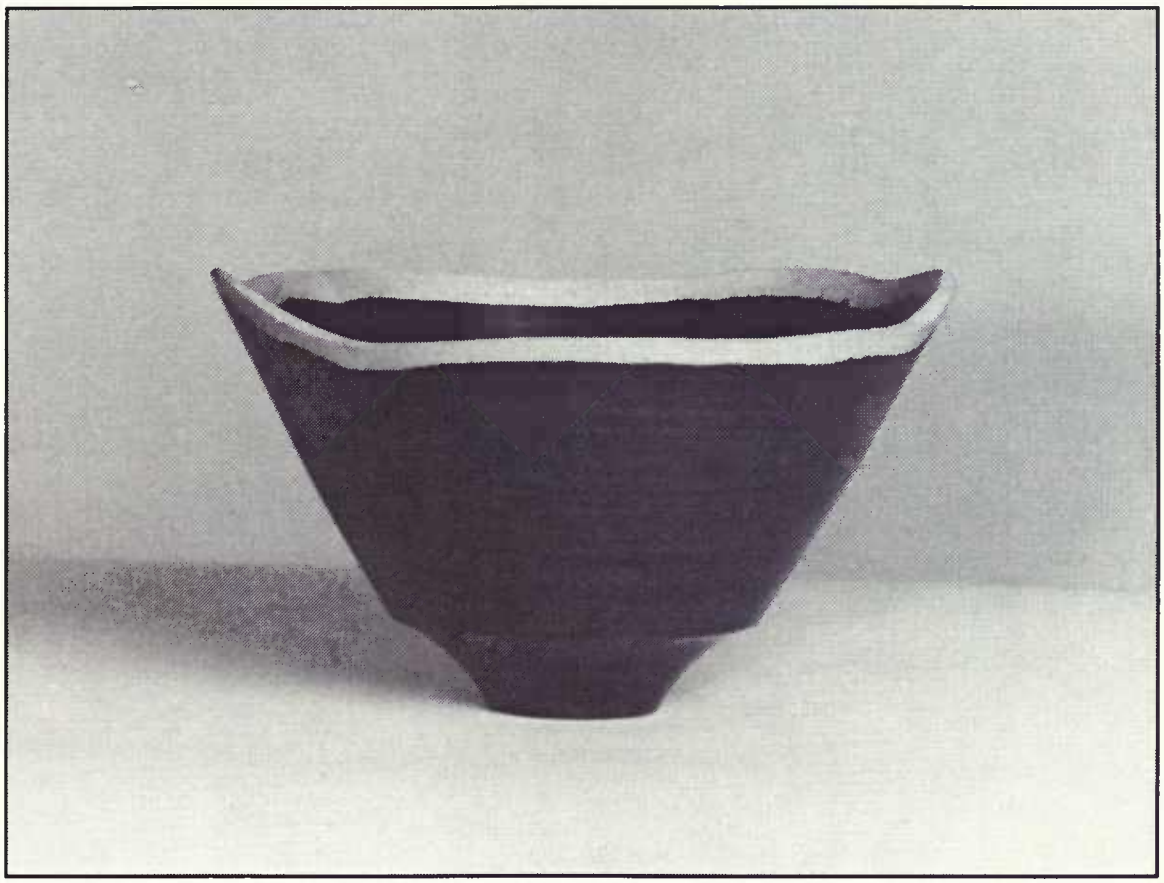
Ebony bowl (Philippines), Bob Stocksdale. 2.25" (H) x 8.25" (D), 1989.

Photograph © 1992 Tom Grotta, courtesy Brown/Grotta Gallery.



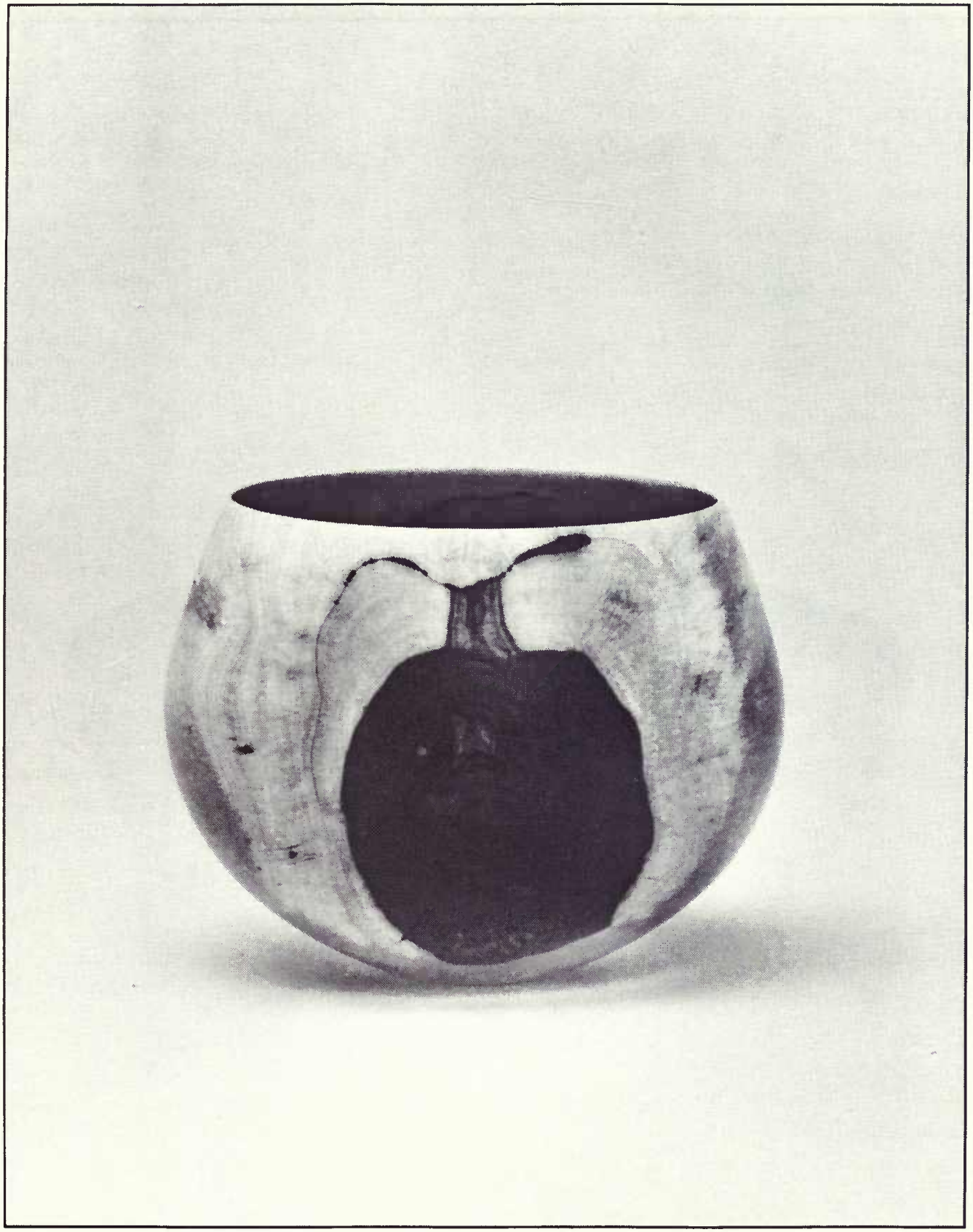
Ebony bowl (Philippines), Bob Stocksdale. 2.25" (H) x 8.25" (D), 1989.

Photograph © 1992 Tom Grotta, courtesy Brown/Grotta Gallery.



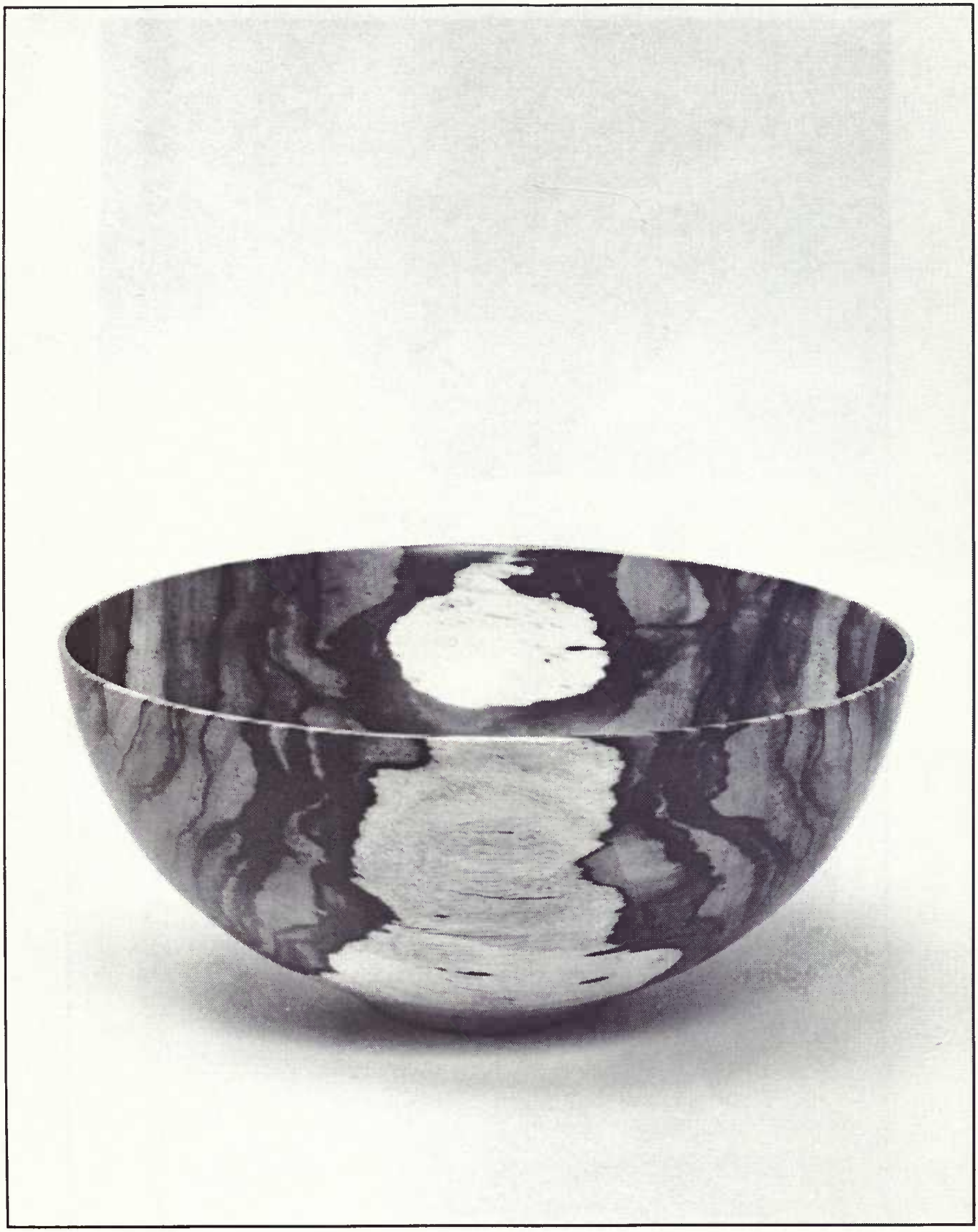
African blackwood (Africa), Bob Stocksdale. 4.5" (H) x 7.75" x 7.25", 1993.

Photograph © 1993 Tom Grotta, courtesy Brown/Grotta Gallery.



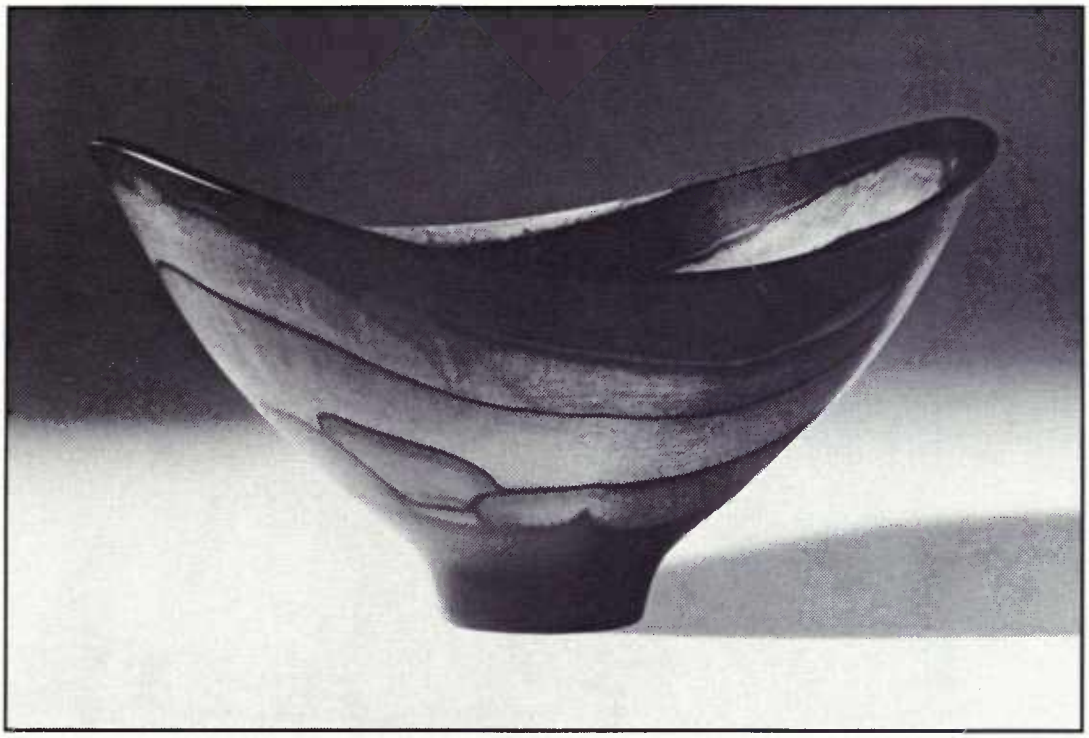
Wild persimmon bowl, Bob Stocksdale. 6" (D).

Photograph by Stone and Steccati Photographers



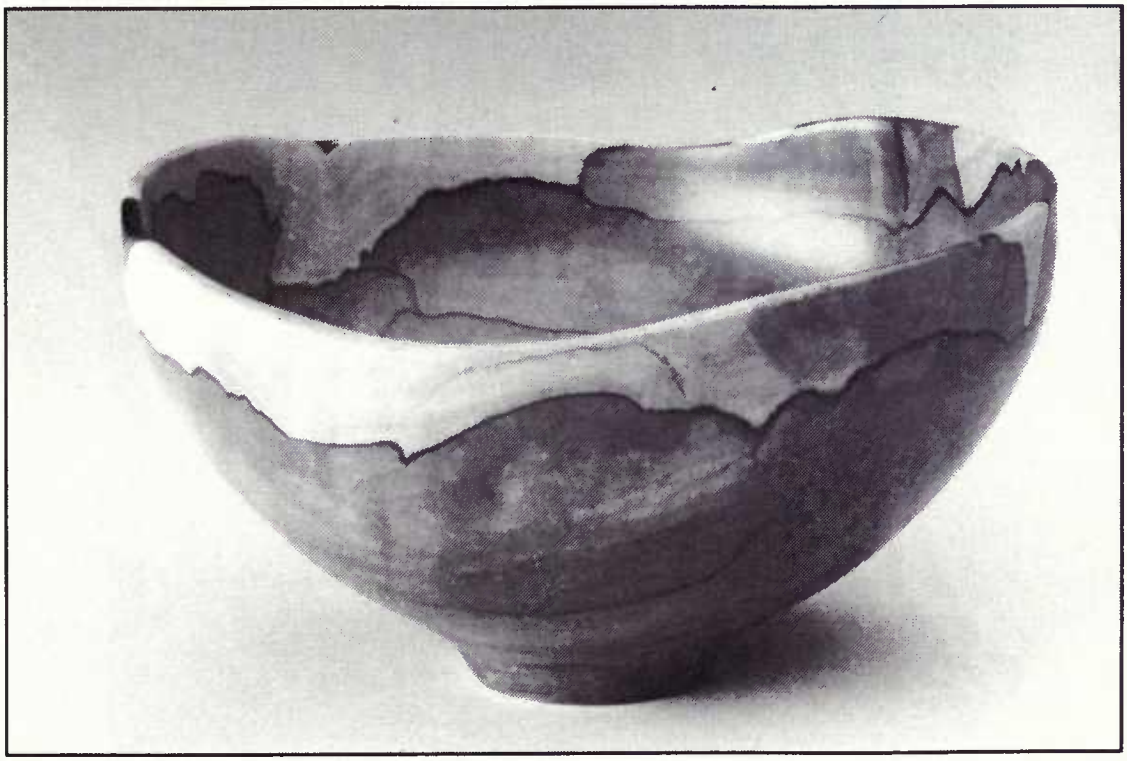
Cocobolo bowl, in Stocksdale collection. 4" x 11", 1978.

Photograph by Stone and Steccati Photographers



Ebony bowl (Ceylon), Bob Stocksdale. 3.5" (H) x 7.5" (D). (Now in permanent collection of Boston Museum of Fine Arts.)

Photograph courtesy Schopplein Studio

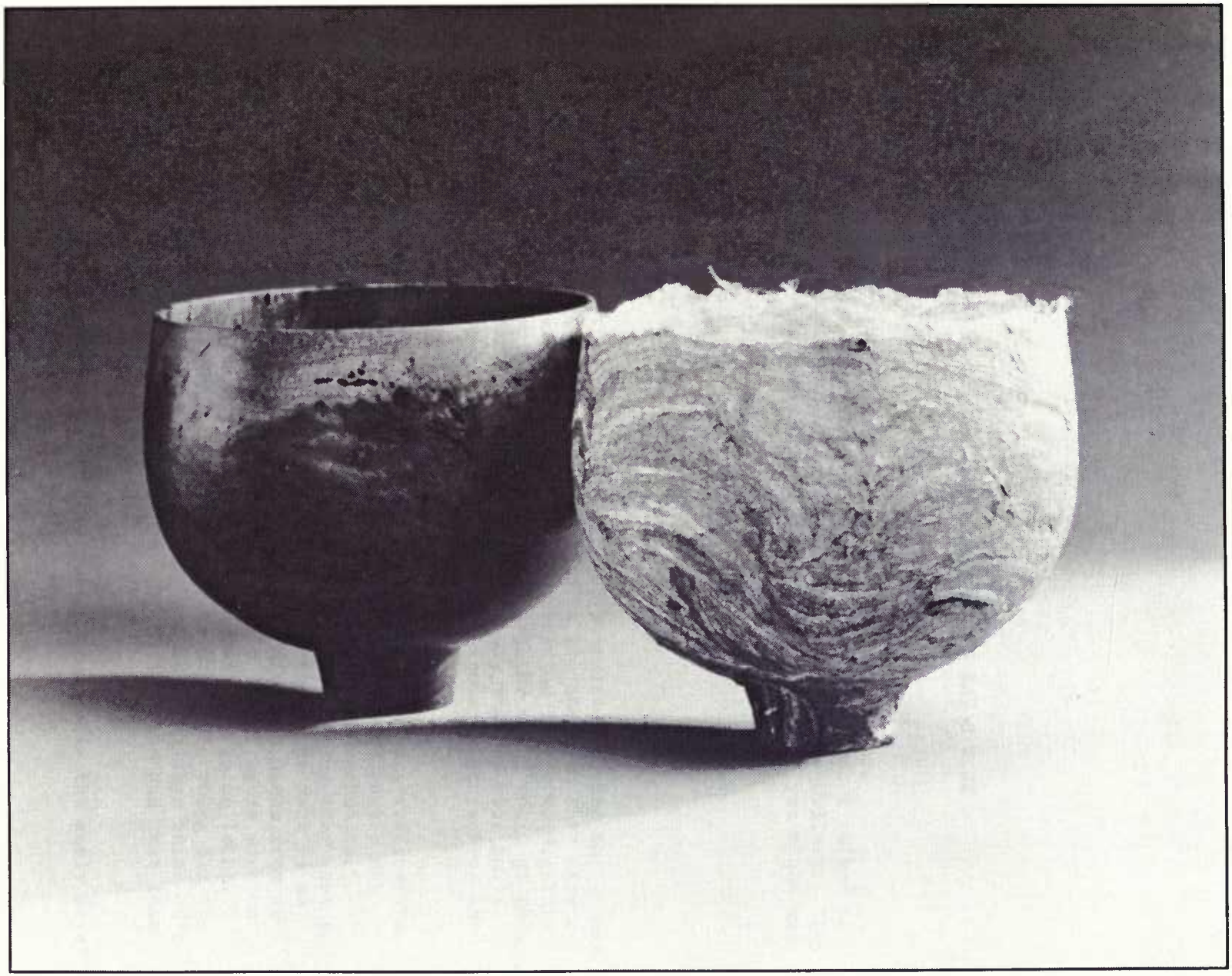


Flowering pear bowl, Bob Stocksdale. 3" x 6", 1994.

Photograph by F. Lee Fatheree

Ebony bowl, Bob Stocksdale. 4" deep x 13" across diameter.

Photograph by Stone and Steccati Photographers



From "Marriage in Form," Bob Stocksdale and Kay Sekimachi. Stocksdale's walnut bowl, 5" (H) x 6" (D); Sekimachi's hornet's nest bowl, 5" (H) x 6" (D), Fall 1993 to September 1996.

Photograph courtesy Renwick Gallery

XI SHOWS, THE "PLEASE TOUCH" VIEW, AND KAY'S WORK

[Interview 4: September 13, 1996] ##

Nathan: [tests tape] As we mentioned a few minutes ago, I talked to Rhonda Brown and Tom Grotta of the Brown/Grotta Gallery. They were very forthcoming and suggested some things you might want to comment about.

Women for Weaving, Men for Wood

Nathan: They said that when they originally started showing Kay's work in weaving, women were attracted to it, and when they started showing your work, the men were attracted to the wood. They said that when couples would come in, the women would go this way to Kay's, the men would go that way towards your bowls. Do you have any idea why wood is particularly attractive to men?

Stocksdale: It's mostly because wood always brings to mind a woodshop, a place for the people as a hobby or for retired people who always wanted a wood shop. If they have any mechanical inclinations at all, why, that's the first thing they want to do, is start in a woodshop. And then the lathe work is so easy to get into, to make a complete finished piece from an ordinary piece of wood without a whole lot of extra work on other machines, too. You can make small things on lathe, start with a rough piece of wood, do the whole thing all the way through on the one machine. So the men always think of a woodshop as a source of supply for their ideas and that sort of thing.

Nathan: And who knows, maybe that attracted you too in the early days?

Stocksdale: Yes. Well, I've always had a love for tools. And I've collected tools all my life. So that was one of the main things that took me into the woodshop.

Nathan: When the items were on display, I think it was Tom Grotta who said they had placed items so that they would be interesting in a certain pattern. They didn't want people to touch anything, because, especially the fiber materials, some would get harmed. But you said, "They have to touch the wood. That's what wood is for." Do you remember that?

Stocksdale: Yes. I would have a little sign there, "Please touch." And that is the first thing people want to do, is to feel wood. So that's what helped sell it.

Nathan: Exactly. So people would pick up the bowl, and then what would they do?

Stocksdale: Oh, look it all over, and hold it up to where they could see the profile and that sort of thing. They always liked to pick it up.

Nathan: And then the gallery people felt they had to rearrange everything? [laughs]

Stocksdale: Yes, and "Please do not touch."

Nathan: Right. Well, you certainly won your point with them. So people convince themselves; you don't have to persuade them?

Stocksdale: No.

Nathan: They mentioned too that when you had an opening, I guess of a joint show, that people came from all over the country to see you. Were you aware of this kind of response?

Stocksdale: Yes. I knew that there were a lot of people who came for the opening of the show, so some of them traveled for quite a ways to do it.

Nathan: Were most of them known to you?

Stocksdale: Yes. They were usually friends of ours, an occasional relative, but not so many. [laughter]

Wood as a Gift and a Problem

Nathan: Did somebody bring a log to pay homage to you on one occasion? Does that ring a bell? Do people do that quite often?

Stocksdale: Oh, yes, they bring wood. Even when we had the show in New York, somebody had a piece of firewood that they brought along.

Nathan: [laughs] What kind of wood? Would that be pine?

Stocksdale: No, it was something like cherry or walnut or something like that. But they thought it was great.

Nathan: What do you do on such occasions?

Stocksdale: Well, I take the piece of wood, but I don't always bring it back home with me. Once in a great while, somebody will have a piece of wood and for sentimental reasons, they want a piece, a bowl made from it. I'm thinking of the famous potter, Toshiko Takaezu. Do you know her?

Nathan: No, I don't. [Some weeks later, I did see pictures of her work.]

Stocksdale: She's probably the top potter in the country now, and she lives in New Jersey. We have three or four of her pieces upstairs in there. The brilliant blue pots are hers, and then a dark grey one too is hers. Anyway, she was coming out here for an exhibition, and she brought along a piece of real firewood that was cut for the stove. It was magnolia, and so she thought that she'd like to have a bowl made from that piece of wood. It was cracked, badly cracked, you know, just really no good. But I struggled around and got a bowl made from it, and I sent it to her, and she was so pleased with it that she sent me one of those little blue bowls worth probably a thousand dollars.

Learning to Repair Cracks

Nathan: Amazing. Now, when you have a piece of wood like that that's really cracked and improperly dried, is there a way for you to mend major cracks?

Stocksdale: Yes, there is, but it's not always easy. In this case, it was fairly easy to do the repairs on it so that I could get a bowl that looked all right.

Nathan: What do you put in the cracks?

Stocksdale: I put sanding dust from a similar colored wood, not necessarily from the same wood, but real fine sanding dust, and mix it with two parts of slow-drying epoxy and make sort of a putty out of that combination. The epoxy has a tendency to darken more than the piece of wood, so I quite often use a lighter color of wood to do the repair, and then the epoxy darkens it and it matches fairly well.

Nathan: When you say sanding dust, is that the dust that falls from the wood when you're sanding it?

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: Like very fine sawdust?

Stocksdale: Yes. And of course, when I'm sanding a bowl, on the inside, it sort of collects in there, especially if I'm sanding the inside bottom of the bowl, then it collects in the outer edges. Then you just take a little fine brush and brush that off onto a piece of paper and save it so that you have enough to mix up with the epoxy.

Nathan: How do you keep it until you have enough?

Stocksdale: Oh, I've got a bunch of little bottles that have labels on them. I've got about, oh, ten or fifteen different colors of wood. I'm more after the color than I am the variety of wood.

Nathan: I see. And when you have gone through the process, is the corrected crack as strong as the rest of the bowl?

Stocksdale: Very much so, yes. It's just as strong. About the same hardness as the rest of the piece of wood, and so it works very well.

Nathan: How did you figure out the best way to mend cracks?

Stocksdale: Trial and error. [laughter] Originally, I used white glue. Well, that didn't work too well, because white glue shrinks when it dries. To make a repair on a crack or something, you've got to have something that won't shrink. Epoxy doesn't shrink in the drying. It sets up, and maybe it even expands a little, I don't know. But anyway, it sure never shrinks in

drying or setting up. So that's the main feature of using the epoxy.

Nathan: And then it was the question of color that you had to figure out?

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: If you run your finger over an area that has been mended in the way that you've described, could you tell a difference in the surface or the texture?

Stocksdale: Sometimes you can, and maybe after a few years, like right there, you can feel it.

Nathan: This is on your dining table. What sort of wood did you say this table is?

Stocksdale: This is black walnut. This table-top was repaired with epoxy and sanding dust. Over the years, that's held. You can still feel it.

Nathan: Interesting, that crack is wavy, rather beautiful on the table.

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: Did you learn this when you were restoring antique furniture way back then?

Stocksdale: I learned a little of it, yes, but that was before the use of epoxy really.

Nathan: About when did you start with epoxy, do you remember?

Stocksdale: Oh, probably in the late forties, fifties.

Nathan: I see. And that has still remained the best material?

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: If the bowl should get wet, does that bother the epoxy?

Stocksdale: Not at all. No, it's waterproof.

Nathan: Now we can go on to another remark of Mr. Grotta. He said that there was a diverse crowd that came to your show, and he said, "As though they came from the Sears Roebuck tool room."

Did he mean people who understood tools, and had that feeling for them that you have?

Stocksdale: Maybe so.

Nathan: He also mentioned that your big salad bowls that tend to be relatively heavy, sell well in the East. The small bowls, the decorative bowls, sell everywhere. Can you imagine any reason why this should be the case?

Stocksdale: No, I don't, unless there's no stores or galleries or anything like that that sell well-made salad bowls in the East. And even here now, Gump's don't have anybody now that deals with bowls in the same way I do.

Nathan: And Fraser's, there's no more Fraser's, I guess.

Stocksdale: No. And so I have an open field now.

Nathan: It's interesting, I've seen some big salad bowls made by others that were very, very heavy. They didn't have grace or interest.

Luther Burbank's Tree

Stocksdale: Yes. That bowl up there drying, you see the big one?

Nathan: Yes. Oh, that's big.

Stocksdale: That is from the tree that Luther Burbank planted. That's the largest piece that I could get out of it. That goes to the curator of our show, Signe Mayfield, who you probably have talked to about it. She said she wanted the largest bowl I could make out of it.

Nathan: What would you say is the diameter of that bowl on the top?

Stocksdale: That's about fifteen inches in diameter. It's about six inches deep.

Nathan: And what kind of a tree did Luther Burbank plant?

Stocksdale: It was one of the walnut trees, and this is called Bastogne [spells] walnut.

Nathan: Was the tree finally cut down?

Stocksdale: It died, so they took it out, yes. So I got a lot of the whole tree.

Nathan: Oh, that was smart. I can see where you have it drying up on a high shelf there, and there is one of those metal bands around the top but nowhere else.

Stocksdale: Yes. It didn't need any bands, actually. I just put that on in case it started developing a little crack along the rim, but it didn't.

Nathan: This is again the hood over your kitchen stove. You've got [counting]--looks like maybe six or seven drying at the same time.

Stocksdale: Yes. All of them are dry now, including Signe's bowl. When I put that up there, it weighed thirteen pounds. I haven't weighed it since then, but I expect it weighs less than ten pounds now. But when I put it on the lathe now, turn it down to the thickness I want it finished, it will probably weigh around five pounds, finished. I won't make any attempt to turn it as thin as possible, because it's going to be a salad bowl, so I want it good and sturdy.

Nathan: Right. About what thickness would you think would be best for this?

Stocksdale: Well, about three eighths of an inch.

Nathan: Yes, because a salad bowl does take a lot of handling, obviously.

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: You mentioned Signe. She wrote a beautiful introduction to your joint show with Kay. It was all there, a splendid biographical essay.

Stocksdale: Sure, yes. She's quite a charming gal.

Gold Medal for Lifetime Achievement

Nathan: Oh, absolutely. Tom Grotta also mentioned that the gallery had done a joint show of your work and Kay's, as he said very proudly, "Before the Palo Alto show." And he refers to you as two living treasures. [laughs] He has a very particular regard for you. I did want to ask you about the gold medal lifetime achievement award. Was that from the American Craft Council?

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: Was that about 1985?

Stocksdale: '95.

Nathan: 1995, great. Are there only you and Sam Maloof who ever have gotten that?

Stocksdale: In wood.

Nathan: How did that award come about, do you know?

Stocksdale: I really don't know myself. The committee I guess decided that I was old enough to get it. [laughter]

Nathan: Maybe there was something else. [laughter]

Stocksdale: And the committee said that it was unanimous, and that's an exception too. I had no idea that I would even be eligible.

Nathan: I imagine somebody has to nominate you, and then they investigate?

Stocksdale: Yes. But I guess it's more the fact that I've been doing bowls longer than anybody else. [laughter]

Nathan: Good bowls. [laughs] There's some quality in there.

Stocksdale: And I got off to a very good start, you see, by showing at Gump's, and as I said, then Gump's turned me on to other very fine shops, like Nieman Marcus and J. L. Hudson and Bullock's and Georg Jensen.

Nathan: I'm writing these down to help the transcriber.

Stocksdale: Yes. And Bonniers [spells] is another one.

Nathan: Oh, that's right, I think you've mentioned that.

Stocksdale: They're no longer in operation. They were, I guess, Danish.

Nathan: It's interesting how the doors opened for you, or somebody would open a door and then all of the others came along.

Stocksdale: Yes. And oh, I must tell you about one time, a special order came through. It was from a Mr. Fairchild. He had seen my bowls someplace, and he wanted a big one, so I said I could make one. We were talking on the phone for quite a while, and

I said, "What do you do?" He said, "Oh, I make airplanes." [laughter] Sherman Fairchild.

Nathan: And you were able to do what he wanted?

Stocksdale: Yes. [laughter]

Making Bowl Sets with Kay

Nathan: Oh, that's interesting, the way people come to you. Some have the impression when they talk to you that you care more about pushing Kay and her work than in promoting your own.

Stocksdale: Maybe so.

Nathan: Maybe so. [laughter] It's also the question of how it is to see someone else's work on a daily basis, whether a kind of silent collaboration develops. Do you have any thoughts about perhaps how you and Kay exchange ideas or influences?

Stocksdale: No. I occasionally ask her about shapes, and especially for the "Marriage in Form" bowls. Now, we've made more than a dozen sets of the "Marriage in Form" pieces.

Nathan: A dozen sets? And what does a set consist of?

Stocksdale: Well, a set means a wood bowl by me, and then Kay uses that bowl as a form for her hornet's nest bowl, and so they're a matching pair.

Nathan: Oh, and they are presented and sold as a pair?

Stocksdale: As a pair, yes. I don't make any attempt to make them exactly the same, one set to another, but I just make a pleasing shape, you know, and then Kay copies that shape with her hornet's nest. I have to keep in mind the fact that she has to make the hornet's nest bowl on my bowl and then also get it off of that bowl. I don't dare to have it too complicated, don't make it a ball shape, because that would complicate matters for Kay. So it has to be more of an open type bowl.

Nathan: What do you call a bowl with that little stand on the bottom of the bowl?

Stocksdale: Footed bowl. The foot should really have a taper to it. The one that we have there tapers towards the base so that it comes off of that base easily.

Nathan: Maybe we should just say that the hornet's nest is made of hornets' paper. Is it usually white or off white?

Stocksdale: Gray, or sometimes brown.

Nathan: I see. And yours is wood-colored wood, solid.

Stocksdale: Yes. And I use various woods, you know, like walnut and pistachio and Brazilian rosewood.

Endangered Woods

Nathan: Yes. You did say something about some limitation on using rosewood?

Stocksdale: Yes, they don't export it any more from Brazil. It's an endangered species. So even if they would export it, nobody would buy it in this country.

Nathan: Are you in sympathy with this decision?

Stocksdale: Yes, sure. Although I still have a stock of Brazilian rosewood which I occasionally work with. I don't push it very much.

Nathan: Sure. Has this happened to any other species of wood?

Stocksdale: Oh, yes, several different species. The kingwood is another one. It's in the rosewood family. So anyway, there's quite a few of the exotic woods that are getting to be impossible to get.

Nathan: Are there any native American woods that are now endangered?

Stocksdale: None that I know of.

Nathan: Well, as long as people keep planting cherry orchards and walnut orchards, there is still hope?

Query About Kay's Award ##

Nathan: Just briefly, I learned something about Kay that I didn't know when we were doing her oral history memoir, so I'm going to ask you about it, if I may. That in 1997, in February, she is going to be honored in Philadelphia, by the Women's Caucus for Art?

Stocksdale: Yes, Women's Caucus. I don't know where they come up with that name. It dates quite a number of years back, because Louise Nevelson and Georgia O'Keefe are two of the most notable women artists that were given this same award. Several local artists, too, got it, like Ruth Asawa and Claire Falkenstein. Oh, another one is a famous New York artist, Lenore Tawney.

Nathan: Oh, Lenore Tawney, oh, yes. A fiber artist also. Interesting.

Stocksdale: Yes. And she got her award a few years back.

Nathan: Again, do you know what the process is? That is, somebody nominates Kay, or how did that work, do you know?

Stocksdale: I don't know. I don't know whether it was the previous people who got the award do the selecting, or just what it is. Probably Kay could tell you.

Nathan: Right. Right, but that's really a wonderful thing.

After a Bowl Is Finished

Nathan: Tom Grotta also mentioned that you had a policy about not increasing prices, except just to match the cost of living changes. How did you come by that decision?

Stocksdale: I found that I could make a good living with the prices the way they were, and I didn't like to try to get rich quick or anything like that, so I never did charge nearly as much as I could have. A lot of people felt that I should mark them up more. Then my friends couldn't buy them.

Nathan: Right. I can see your point. When you have finished a bowl, do you keep any record of where it goes, or do you photograph it?

Stocksdale: Hardly ever. Once in a while.

Nathan: Was that a deliberate decision on your part?

Stocksdale: No, it's just that I'm not a photographer, and I just don't want to bother with getting it photographed. Occasionally I get a group of bowls photographed. But Tom Grotta has taken a lot of photographs of my work, far more than I have.

Nathan: He mentioned that he also has a color postcard of you sitting on a log. He said he had some prints of pictures that he will let us use, so we can ask for them and see which ones we want to use in the volume.

Stocksdale: Right. I know he's got very good ones of "Marriage in Form" sets.

Nathan: That's a good idea.

There was a question of maintenance. Once you have created a bowl and you have finished with it, and it is in the hands of a museum or a gallery or private collector, then what do they mean by maintenance?

Stocksdale: For a salad bowl as I've said, of course, all it needs is washing with soap and water or detergent and water after it's used to get some of the oils off the surface, get back to the raw wood. That's about all it needs. Occasionally maybe scrubbing with a pot cleaner, something like that, would help. But most people are afraid to use that.

Nathan: [laughs] Yes. It sounds so rough to use on such a beautiful object.

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: And there are people who won't put soap on their salad bowls, because they claim that it will spoil the olive oil aroma.

Stocksdale: Yes. And of course, using olive oil is better for the salad bowl than using the regular salad oils.

Nathan: Why is that?

Stocksdale: Well, the salad oils accumulate in the bowl much quicker than the olive oil does, and so for that reason, it's better to use olive oil in the bowls.

Nathan: I hope the producers of olive oil are taking that into consideration. [laughing]

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: And is there any other maintenance, for example, for these beautiful smaller bowls?

Stocksdale: No, they're mostly decorative bowls. They can be used for oily things like nuts and things like that, and just wiped out with a cloth, wet cloth, damp cloth, dried. They don't need much.

Nathan: Do people bring bowls back to you for some kind of refinishing?

Stocksdale: Not very often. Once in a while they do.

Nathan: I remember the tale of the smashed salad bowl. I can see why that would have to come back to you. [laughing] That was really awful.

Stocksdale: Still setting down in my shop.

Nathan: Kind of intimidating?

Stocksdale: I'm waiting for the replacement piece of cherry to--it hasn't shown up yet. The fellow in Indiana is kind of slow about cutting that tree.

Nathan: Really. You had mentioned this artist who sent you a beautiful piece of pottery in thanks for what you had done for her. Do you do much in the way of bartering with other artists, somebody who wants your bowl and asks if you would like something of theirs?

Stocksdale: Once in a while. We got our cupboards full of other people's work now, and so we don't want to overburden our closets. So we have to be pretty careful about who we trade with and what we trade for.

Nathan: Right. Well, the objects are very carefully selected, I can see that you have on view. Now, like the Sam Maloof rocker, that was not a trade, I presume

Stocksdale: No, that was a gift.

Nathan: Pretty nice gift.

Stocksdale: He's got a couple of hundred of my pieces.

Nathan: Well, that sounds like a complex trade. Are there any other things that are, as you glance around the rooms, special favorites that you particularly enjoy?

Stocksdale: No, I don't think so.

Large Salad Bowls and Baskets

Nathan: Up on that very high rafter that's near the ceiling in the back, are those baskets?

Stocksdale: Yes, those are Kay's work, and those were made from large salad bowls that I had made. The large salad bowl, you see, was the form that she used to make those. Those are a different technique than what she uses for her small bowls, because they're coiled from a rope that is made of paper. It's used in the upholstery industry to make a beading.

Nathan: Oh, I see.

Stocksdale: And you get it in most any diameter that you want. You just coil it around.

Nathan: How does she connect it together? Does she stitch parts of the coil to each other?

Stocksdale: Maybe, I think she stitches it a little.

Nathan: I'm sure this has occurred to you many times, but it does look like the Indian coiled baskets.

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: What would you say the diameters of those couple of bowls might be? They're larger than your salad bowls.

Stocksdale: [moves away] The one in the middle is--that's probably twenty inches across and ten inches or twelve inches high.

Nathan: And they're sort of sand-colored, kind of a natural neutral.

Stocksdale: Yes. And then the others are bigger in diameter but not so high.

Nathan: Right. Is there a limit to the size of bowl that you can make in wood?

Stocksdale: Not really, no.

Nathan: Could you make a bowl if I had a tree as big as the diameter of this table, which is what, four feet or something?

Stocksdale: This is five feet.

Nathan: Five feet. If I had a big hunk of wood that was five feet across, could you make a bowl out of it?

Stocksdale: Well, I wouldn't want to try. [laughter] Not with the equipment I have, because with my lathe, the biggest I could make is thirty-one inches in size. So I could take it to a larger lathe, but I wouldn't want to do it.

Nathan: No. Now, Kay could then work up to that size, if she chose, she could use that form as a base for her structures?

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: And they would stand and be strong enough?

Stocksdale: Sure.

Nathan: It's so easy to see and appreciate these many small, beautiful bowls. It never occurred to me that you could make a bowl big enough to bathe a baby in. It's just enormous. [laughs]

Stocksdale: Yes. I remember one time for a Christmas card, I had a bowl as big around as this, twenty-four inches, and about six inches deep, and we set my daughter Joy inside of that, holding the two paddles. She was one year old at the time.

Nathan: [laughs] What a wonderful picture. Does she love it still, or would she rather not talk about it?

Stocksdale: Yes, I'm sure that Kay has a copy of it somewhere. And we said, "A bowlful of Joy for your Christmas cheer."

Nathan: [laughs] Oh, terrible. [laughter]

Stocksdale: That was when I was married to my first wife.

Nathan: I see. Well, you could hardly be expected to resist that. It's such a natural. Was the baby Joy dressed?

Stocksdale: Oh, yes, her mother had great fun dressing her up in all kinds of costumes. And then when Kim came along, why, she would dress the two of them up. Some pretty wild arrangements.

A Look for Special Events

Nathan: That's great.

When we talked a little at the end of the session last time, you spoke of your ceremonial garments, what you wear when there is a great big formal do, and you really have to be quite carefully dressed. You mentioned a shirt which comes from the shop, Obiko.

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: Is it a dress shirt, business shirt?

Stocksdale: Yes, it is. I can get it if you want to wait.

Nathan: I think it would be fun to describe it. I'll just stop this while you go get it. [tape interruption] This is very handsome. It's an ikat?

Stocksdale: Ikat, yes. It's an old antique fabric.

Nathan: I see. Did you bring the fabric to her?

Stocksdale: No, she had the fabric. So I don't know how old it is.

Nathan: Well, I guess in Japanese it would be called kasuri? It is amazing how modern it looks. It looks like a black background with a very small, is that white or grey figure, that repeats. There are two different figures that repeat many, many times. That is elegant. Do you wear it hanging out, you don't tuck it in?

Stocksdale: No, I tuck it in.

Nathan: It's very soft.

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: And then the tie, that is beautifully done.

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: Is that a Japanese style?

Stocksdale: Yes, this is indigo, indigo dye.

Nathan: Is it linen? It looks hand-woven.

Stocksdale: It's probably linen, yes.

Nathan: And it looks very rich with the shirt.

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: The indigo is dyed I guess in different dips, because part of it is somewhat lighter.

Stocksdale: I don't know how he did it. And then you've seen the tie tack.

Nathan: I have seen the famous tie tack. [laughs] That you've told me was an Allan Boardman tie tack.

Stocksdale: Yes. [Allan was a CEO in the airplane industry. He's retired now, and spends most of his time on puzzles. He's an expert. His puzzle-making developed as sort of a sideline. He was making a lot of them out of wood, and decided to make a dozen little puzzles out of gold. He had it milled to the size he needed, and cut it with his woodworking tools. You can see the little jade ball inside the twelve pieces of the puzzle. It's multi-dimensional, 3/8 of an inch in diameter overall. Allan warned me not to take it apart.]

Nathan: And you are willing to put a little hole in that gorgeous tie?

Stocksdale: Oh, sure. It doesn't show.

Nathan: No, it doesn't. Do you wear any kind of jacket over this?

Stocksdale: I usually wear my camel jacket.

Nathan: Someday I hope to see you in this outfit. It's really beautiful, really beautiful. Thank you for showing me this.

Stocksdale: Sure.

Nathan: Now that I've had a chance to see some of your lovely finery, do you want to go on a little longer or have you had enough for today?

Stocksdale: We can go on a little longer if you have other things you want to talk about.

More on Drying Bowls

Nathan: Okay, well, let's try another couple of topics. [tape interruption] You were saying that you were going to let me see some new bowls, and you got some macadamia wood?

Stocksdale: Yes. I just got a shipment of macadamia wood from Hawaii, and I'm expecting another shipment this week too. It doesn't look like it's going to show up this week, but maybe it will. So it's drying while my eyes are healing [from an operation]. I got the bowls in a tub. It's a styrofoam cooler, so they can't dry out very fast. Very slow.

Nathan: Is it covered?

Stocksdale: I've got it covered. I've got a cover thrown over it loosely, so air does circulate a little on that. I go down and open it up once in a while and check the bands. If they're loose, why, then I tighten them up.

Nathan: Now, are these already in the shape of bowls?

Stocksdale: Yes. I leave them thick, you see.

Nathan: Right. I'd like to see those. You showed me a couple when we were down in your workshop before, but I'd like to see each one as it comes along.

More on Design Shows and Meetings

Nathan: Thinking about professional development in the sixties, as you were progressing along in your work and your career, how important to you were the California Design shows in the sixties? You were represented in most of them?

Stocksdale: Yes. I always enjoyed showing in those, got a lot of good publicity from them. So they were nice to have. I was sorry to see them stop.

Nathan: When did they stop? Do you remember about how long they continued?

Stocksdale: No, I don't know. They went on for more than ten years, I know that. I think we got to eleven.

Nathan: Well, were they sales catalogs, to some extent?

Stocksdale: Well, not necessarily sales, because I don't know whether they even sold from the exhibition or not.

Nathan: But people could see your work, and then know it was yours, and then they reached you. Is that how it worked?

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: Then there was a show in the Pasadena Art Museum in 1965, I think it was one of the design shows, and I know some of your things were also featured in that one.

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: Moving over to Oakland, and there was a California Craftsman Second Biennial sponsored by the Oakland Museum and the American Craftsman's Council. Do these ring any bells, these individual shows?

Stocksdale: No, I can't remember very much of that.

Nathan: Did you get acquainted with any of the other crafts people through these shows?

Stocksdale: Oh, yes, sure. Always.

Nathan: Would you go down there to the show itself?

Stocksdale: Yes. Yes, we'd always go down.

Nathan: I think you said earlier that you simply did this yourself, that you had no agent.

Stocksdale: Right. I never had an agent. Gump's always hinted that they would like to have an exclusive with me, but [laughs] I always hinted that I wasn't the least bit interested.

Nathan: [laughs] Have a hinting duel.

Stocksdale: Yes.

More on Wood Collecting

Nathan: You've spoken of lignum vitae and jenisero, black walnut, Brazilian rosewood. Were there other woods at that time in the sixties that you were working with to make the decorative bowls?

Stocksdale: Oh, I expect there were. There was quite a few, because back in the sixties, I acquired a large collection of rare and fancy woods from two members of the International Wood Collectors Society, as I said earlier. They had collected for a number of years from an importer of real exotic woods there in Los Angeles. So they would just buy a usable piece of wood, you know, you could make a bowl or a plate or something like that out of, and they would keep it. They would not cut it up into samples.

Nathan: Oh, yes, I remember the samples.

Stocksdale: So when I acquired those two different collectors' collections, then I had quite a number of real exotic woods. Some of them I haven't ever had since then. I still have a few pieces left from some of those collections. So I had all kinds of very exotic woods then.

Nathan: Must have been wonderful, just to see what you had.

Stocksdale: Yes, it was. Both of them were real wonderful because they had not only bought the wonderful selection of woods, but also the very finest pieces of the wood that they could find at the importer's place.

Nathan: Could such a windfall ever happen again?

Stocksdale: Not very likely. Maybe when I pass on, somebody will get my collection of wood.

Nathan: No, make all the bowls first. [laughter] That must have given your whole opportunity a big boost.

Stocksdale: Yes, it did.

Nathan: What an exciting thing for you. It's lasted till this day. Let's see, we can talk about your marriage to Kay and a few other events in your life next time, but this is just about near the end of the tape right now.

Oh, I wanted to ask you about one thing. Are there any bowls that you do that are not for sale, that are important to you, that you don't want to sell?

Stocksdale: Not until they're made. Then maybe I'll decide I don't want to sell them. But I don't take a piece of wood and make a bowl with the intention of keeping it. After it's made, why, then Kay gets to see it.

Nathan: [laughs] I can understand that.

Stocksdale: That's a determining factor.

Nathan: Now, when you select aside those that are not going to be sold, would you still allow them to be shown in a museum?

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: That's understandable. I think I will turn off the machine, and then I'd love to go down and see some of those bowls in that special room in your workshop.

Stocksdale: Okay.

Nathan: Great.

XII FAMILY SETTING, AWARDS; MARRIAGE AND LIFE WITH KAY SEKIMACHI

[Interview 5: October 21, 1996] ##

Nathan: Good morning. We have talked about parts of your career. Perhaps you would like to have a word about how you met Kay, and how you decided to get married. How long had you known each other before this happy event?

Friends and Neighbors

Stocksdale: Yes. Well, see, I've known Kay for quite a number of years, as you can tell by that Berkeley Gazette article in 1955, I think it was, where we're both on the same page.

Nathan: Right.

Stocksdale: [laughs] I've known her at least that long, and probably longer, because she only lived five blocks from here. She lived over there with her mother and one sister, her younger sister. We would visit back and forth a little. In fact, she had us--Nan, my first wife, and I, and I think maybe the kids too--down for dinner a couple of times to their house. So we got acquainted with not only Kay but her sister and her mother too. It's been quite a long time.

And then we would run across each other at the various art festivals, especially the San Francisco Art Festival down at Civic Center, and here at the Sidewalk Art Show at Berkeley.

Then finally, when my first wife walked out on me and wanted more freedom, why, I was sort of batching it. Hadn't discussed divorce or anything, but that was when I first

started going with Kay. There was a big party down in Palo Alto, and we were both at a party here in Berkeley. We were talking about this party down in Palo Alto and I said, "Why don't you just go with me instead of driving two separate cars?"

Nathan: Very sensible suggestion.

Stocksdale: That was the start of it, really. I was going pretty steady with her for quite a while, even before I got my first wife to apply for divorce. My first wife and I had decided on an amicable divorce, so we just had one lawyer to do the job. It worked out pretty good, except that my first wife got a little jealous of Kay. [laughs] But eventually, why, things ironed out real well. So we visited with her when she moved down to Santa Cruz and had a mobile home, and we would stop in there and see her. We were quite friendly then.

Nathan: I see. And then you were the one who brought up the children beyond that point?

Stocksdale: Well, the children were both pretty much on their own. Kim was still staying here. [interruption]

Friendly Assistance

Nathan: There was a break in the recording, so I'm going to ask you to say a word about this man who came to the door to tell you he had finished his work. Do you want to say what his name is?

Stocksdale: Dr. Bob Buscho.

Nathan: Do you want to say more about him?

Stocksdale: As I said, he's an emergency room doctor at the Seton Medical Center, and he just loves to turn wood. He's got a pretty good woodshop over there in Marin County. He comes over here, and we've been close personal friends for quite a long time. Even back before Kay and I were married, why, I knew him. He's also a friend of my friend Sam Maloof. He comes over every once in a while when he has a spare day or so.

Nathan: What was he doing for you now down in your workroom?

Stocksdale: Well, he was just cutting up some scrap wood for me to burn in this little stove, because it doesn't take very big stuff, you

see. I got this furniture mill here in town, Berkeley Mills, and they give me all kinds of scrap wood to burn in this little stove. I had a big pile of it there in the garage. I wanted to clear it out and get it a little more ordered.

Nathan: You have very expert help. You also have a fine landscape gardener who comes and looks after your beautiful garden?

Stocksdale: Yes, yes, and she was here just the other day, and I kept worrying about whether we owed her or whether she owed us, you know. And she said, "Oh, we've stopped keeping track. We're so happy to get your bowls. Whenever you think you're a little behind, why, you just give us a bowl. We'll keep up your garden." [laughs]

Nathan: Just as an aside, when I mentioned that I knew you and Kay, one of my neighbors said, "You know, these young people next door have beautiful baskets and bowls. You should really go over there and ask if you can see them."

Stocksdale: Of course.

Nathan: [laughter] It's a wonderful system.

Stocksdale: Yes. Did you go?

Nathan: I haven't gone yet.

Stocksdale: Oh, you should.

Nathan: Right. You've given us some family background. I think you mentioned--

Stocksdale: I didn't mention, but about--let's see, five--no, about six or seven years ago, my first wife died of brain aneurism, it's called, I guess. Blood clot or something. So that was quite a tragedy.

Nathan: Yes it was. It's remarkable to be able to remain on good terms as you did.

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: Are you ready to move on to another question?

Stocksdale: I think so.

Some Professional Awards, Honors, and a Medal

Nathan: I think we mentioned that you had been made a fellow of the American Craft Council in 1978, and then in 1985, the title of California Living Treasure.

Stocksdale: California Living Treasure, yes. That was 1985.

Stocksdale: That was not any national thing; it was just a local thing that the Crocker Art Gallery dreamed up, so it wasn't really official like the National Fellows award was.

Nathan: Right. Were you about to tell me about something that happened in 1995?

Stocksdale: Well, that's when I got the gold medal from the American Craft Council.

Nathan: Right. Was that the gold medal, because you were already a fellow?

Stocksdale: Yes, I was already a fellow. That was just about a year ago now that we went down to St. Petersburg, Florida, so I got that. I'll show you the thing, I just ran across it--[leaves table]

Nathan: Bob is going over to a cabinet in the corner of the dining room, and he's going to look for the medal. I'm going to turn this off. [tape interruption] I see you have it. You were telling me that it's sterling silver and gold plated, and it's, would you say, a teardrop shape?

Stocksdale: Yes, sort of. It's designed by some craftsman up in the Northwest, I think.

Nathan: It's very handsome. It has a lot of weight.

Stocksdale: Yes, it does. Nobody told me this, but here on the side, I think, is a number, and that's the number that shows the purity of the silver.

Nathan: It's 925. [tape interruption]

"Consummate Craftsmanship"

Nathan: Okay, Bob is opening a red certificate envelope [noise], oh, is this handsome. [reading] "The American Craft Council gold medal is presented to Bob Stocksdale in recognition of consummate craftsmanship, October 7, 1995." I can't read the signature of the chairman--it's so fancy. But he or she is chairman of the board. It starts with an R? Does that do anything for you?

Stocksdale: Oh, I don't think so.

Nathan: The paper feels stiff and looks handmade.

Stocksdale: Yes. Well, I don't know just what it is.

Nathan: It is a beautiful piece of printing, and then "Bob Stocksdale" is printed beautifully in ink, a dark blue ink. That's really very handsome.

Stocksdale: Thank you. And that came along with the gold medal. Now, if you turn over the gold medal on the back side--

Nathan: Oh, yes.

Stocksdale: See the inscription there.

Nathan: Right, it says, "The gold medal for craftsmanship to Bob Stocksdale, 1995." And this reverse side, which is a little concave, has a sort of a handwritten effect. It's a little rougher. Very nice to hold in the hands, just the right size.

Stocksdale: Yes. And when I was first given that it said "Robert Stocksdale."

Nathan: Oh, what a mistake.

Stocksdale: I had a fit down there [laughter] in St. Petersburg about it, and some of the officials from New York heard me, I guess, so they called me up a few days later and said, "Well, if you'll send that medal to so-and-so up in the State of Washington, he'll make the corrections on it." So they scraped off the other inscription and put this one on it.

Nathan: Well, he certainly did it well, because it's absolutely perfect, and now it says "Bob Stocksdale," as it should.

Stocksdale: Yes. He did a perfect job.

Nathan: Right. And this, as you said before, is sterling silver and plated with gold. And the number that you referred to, 925 is on the edge.

Stocksdale: Yes. That's the silver, that's a term. 925 parts of 1,000. 1,000 is absolutely pure silver, so it's that close.

Peers, American Association of Wood Turners

Nathan: Well, that's handsome and very nice to handle. I'm glad to see that, thank you. You have had a lot of prizes and recognitions. Are there any others that were of special importance to you as you've gone along?

Stocksdale: Well, the other one is that little plaque up there that I got the same year as this, 1995. [walks away] And this is the honors from my peers.

Nathan: Oh, yes, now, this is a metal plate put on a very handsome slab of wood--[laughter] "Presented to Bob Stocksdale, an honorary lifetime membership of the American Association of Wood Turners, in appreciation for his commitment and contributions to the field of wood turning." Then there is a decorative design of leaves, dated July 7, 1995. That was a pretty good year.

Stocksdale: Yes. And actually, I got that honor right up here at Davis, when they had their national gathering in Davis, California, at the Cal campus up there. After that award I got, just the following day we headed for New York for our traveling show opening in New York. We couldn't stay any longer at this Davis gathering, and so I was only up there for a few hours, and I gave a slide lecture at Davis. Then I got this honor and award, and then we came home and packed up for New York the following day.

Nathan: What a life. Was that the show that started in Palo Alto, the traveling show?

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: "Marriage in Form"?

Stocksdale: "Marriage in Form" show, yes. And it was opening in New York, so we had to be there.

Nathan: Oh, yes, you certainly did.

Stocksdale: But when I got that wood turners award, now, there was 6,000 members of this organization.

Nathan: I had no idea it was so large, before you told me.

Stocksdale: And when I started making bowls, I was the only one doing it. [laughter]

Nathan: So you have a rich progeny [laughing]. Wow, 6,000 is amazing. And they're all over the country?

Stocksdale: All over the country. And Canada too, a lot of them in Canada.

Nathan: Well, that's sort of wonderful.

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: I can see why these are very significant awards for you.

Stocksdale: Yes.

Reviving and Refinishing Bowls from Years Past

Nathan: I wondered whether you would like to say anything about the role of galleries and museum shows in your own development and the way you were able to reach the public? Are there any galleries that have been of particular help to you in the early years?

Stocksdale: Well, over the years, there have been a few galleries that have been helpful, like especially Fraser's here in Berkeley, and I still have a lot of Fraser's old customers coming to me wanting pieces and buying things, and everybody's so nostalgic about Fraser's. Just about, oh, a month ago, I think it was, the former owner of Fraser's, lives up in Sea Ranch now, came down and brought his salad bowl that needed refinishing and a little work on it.

Nathan: Really? [laughs] What is his name?

Stocksdale: Bill Milligan.

Nathan: I think you may have mentioned this before, but I don't want to miss anything. So he brought it in for you to get it back to its original condition?

Stocksdale: Right.

Nathan: And can you do that?

Stocksdale: Oh, yes. In fact, when I got it, I couldn't even recognize the wood that it was made of, it was in such bad shape. After I had scrubbed it off with lacquer thinner and put it on a lathe and sanded it up again, there it was, it was a grafted piece. It was part black walnut and part English walnut, right in the graft of the piece. It didn't show up in the bad condition.

Nathan: Had it gotten dark through use?

Stocksdale: It had darkened and gotten all gummed up.

Nathan: It was the olive oil and vinegar that did that, do you think?

Stocksdale: Well, they didn't take proper care of it, you see, and so they didn't wash it good enough. I tell people they've got to wash them with soap and water and scrub them once in a while. Treat it rough. I think he'll take better care of it now.

Nathan: How does it feel to hold in your hands something that you made all those years ago?

Stocksdale: [laughs] Well, I'm glad to see it, and that I can revive it. I got a piece down there on the shelves now that a fellow bought in a thrift shop for five dollars.

Nathan: Is that possible in this area?

Stocksdale: Yes. And that's not the first one that I've refinished like that. Sometimes in the flea markets and places like that, my pieces show up.

Nathan: You're going to have all the people who read your memoir running out to flea markets. [laughter]

Stocksdale: Yes. So I scrubbed it off and re-lacquered it. Only took a few minutes to do, and it's like new now. He hasn't shown up to pick it up yet, but he will some of these days.

XIII SOME BOOKS AND PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

Nathan: There have been some books that have mentioned you and discussed your work. Are there any that are of particular importance to you or that you remember?

Craftsmen in America

Stocksdale: Well, the main book, I think, is the Craftsmen in America that National Geographic published in 1975. This was just one of their publications that they put out on the market, and it was about old-time craftsmen as well as present-day craftsmen. It turned out that Kay and I were both in this book. Of course, that happened after we were married, and when the photographer from National Geographic came here, why, he photographed my bowl and Kay's work too at the same time for the book, and so we're both in it, and that's quite an honor.

Nathan: Oh, it is.

Stocksdale: So that book is still available. You can find it in used bookstores.

Nathan: Really?

Stocksdale: Yes. And National Geographic sold it for $4.75.

Nathan: Oh, can you believe it. [laughs] Makes you cry.

Stocksdale: I don't know whether it was ever reprinted or not, but we found three or four copies in different bookstores, used bookstores. So I have two copies of it, one upstairs here and the other one down in my shop.

Nathan: There have been a number of artists, curators, and friends who may have been important to you in your life and career, and I have a list. If you say yes, you'd like to talk about this person; if you say no, we'll take the name out. So this will be very selective.

Stocksdale: All right.

Nathan: And there are some people, of course, that you may want to put in.

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: Would this interest you?

Stocksdale: All right, sure.

Identifying Woods

Nathan: I have the name of Mai Arbegast, landscape consultant? Have you known her or worked with her particularly?

Stocksdale: Yes, I've known her for some time, and actually she's been rather helpful in identifying various woods that I have, especially some of the local woods. She has purchased a few pieces of my work, mostly as gifts to her husband, who is also a landscape architect, and they come and supervise the girls who do our garden.

Nathan: Great. So many woods, you can identify, but every now and then you come across something that is new to you?

Stocksdale: Yes. Like just the other day, I had some arbutus.

Nathan: Do you have a big hunk of it?

Stocksdale: Yes. A fellow brought me a big chunk of it, and I made four bowls. I'm down to one bowl now.

Nathan: Are these decorative bowls?

Stocksdale: Yes, decorative bowls. So I still have one bowl down there. I think the girls [the gardeners] are interested in acquiring that, so I may end up giving it to them for $600.

The Question of Museum Purchase

Nathan: Good. If you have more to say, let me know. I'm going to move along; Timothy Burgard, the new curator of American Decorative Arts at the de Young Museum.

Stocksdale: Yes. Well, I'm still waiting on him to respond to our last visit here, and he spent a half a day here. So I am anxious to know about the two pieces he selected for the de Young, whether they're still interested in acquiring them or not, and if they are, why, I'd like to know it. I don't want to keep the bowls forever and find out they don't want them. I'd like to get something on paper. So anyway, I sent him a couple of slides of the pieces and a color print too, and so far I haven't heard from him. This was just about a month ago. I guess he's a very busy man.

Nathan: You never know what bureaucracy is involved.

Stocksdale: Yes. [laughter]

Nathan: Do you collect photos of every bowl?

Stocksdale: Oh, no. No way. I've got photos of a lot of bowls, but no way could I ever get photos of every bowl.

Sales Galleries, Brown/Grotta and del Mano

Nathan: I'm thinking too now of the Brown/Grotta Gallery. Rhonda and Tom?

Stocksdale: Rhonda and Tom, and they're very helpful and they have a wonderful clientele of rich patrons there in the Connecticut area, and actually all over the East Coast area. So we visit them every time we go east and stay at their place and so on.

Nathan: Tom Grotta also was very helpful in talking to me by phone. He's a real enthusiast.

Stocksdale: Yes, yes.

Nathan: Did that connection open up a new area of collectors?

Stocksdale: Well, I think it did, yes. Yes, people there collect my things, so every so often, we get an urgent call from somebody

that wants a big salad bowl or something like that. Sometimes I have one and sometimes I don't.

Nathan: Right. Do you have a gallery that functions the same way closer to home?

Stocksdale: Well, there's del Mano Gallery in Los Angeles.

Nathan: Have they been dealing with your work for some time?

Stocksdale: They buy outright. I don't consign to them at all. They come up here every once in a while for other things, so they'll come. Actually, they're coming, I think it's Wednesday.

Nathan: Thinking of what you've shown me in an earlier session downstairs in your workshop, it looks as though you have quite a bit to show.

Stocksdale: Not really, no, I don't have very much down there. They may buy a piece or two, I don't know. They're coming up to take us out to dinner.

Furniture Makers, Curators, and Collectors

Nathan: Let's see, there's a man named Art Carpenter who made a bowl of California laurel. Is that something important?

Stocksdale: No, I can't connect California laurel with him. He made this desk we have there in our bedroom with the shell, what looks like a shell, on each end of it?

Nathan: Oh, yes.

Stocksdale: He designed and made that, and Kay made a monofilament hanging and traded for that.

Nathan: Oh, so he's actually a furniture maker?

Stocksdale: He's a furniture designer and maker, yes, and has been in it for a long, long time.

Nathan: Maybe he was just trying his hand at a bowl?

Stocksdale: For a while, he was making mostly salad bowls. He was doing quite a bit of turning. That was when his furniture hadn't

caught on. Then he gradually got busy making furniture, and so he dropped the bowl-making.

Nathan: Wharton Esherick? I don't know if he's related to the Esherick that we know in this area.

Stocksdale: I think he is, but distantly related to the Eshericks here, the architects. But I'm not certain about that. He died a long, long time ago, but I knew him before he died. He was a wonderful designer and craftsman.

Nathan: Did he do furniture or bowls?

Stocksdale: He did furniture, practically altogether. A lot of furniture. He worked in the East, I think New Jersey was his studio. I've been to his studio and got acquainted with him down at a big craftsman conference. It was the first national conference of craftsmen, the American Craftsman's Council conference at Asilomar, California in 1957. (It is now called the American Craft Council) I got acquainted with a lot of craftsmen at that conference.

[Also, I attended the First World Congress of Craftsmen in June 1964, at Columbia in New York City, and met many craft people from all over the world. I especially remember meeting Tapio Wirkkala from Finland, a very famous designer of furniture and small objects for the house.

He came up to me in the early morning, and said he had arrived too late the night before, and so slept on a park bench. He did not seem very upset about it. At this conference I also met Walker Weed from New Hampshire, and we are still close friends. He later became director of the woodshop at Hopkins Center at Dartmouth.]

Nathan: What do you get out of that when you meet a lot of craftsmen?

Stocksdale: Mostly fellowship.

Nathan: Sure, that makes sense.

Stocksdale: And I can still remember Esherick at that first conference in 1957, and Sam Maloof and Art Carpenter and a whole lot of other craftspeople were at this conference too.

Nathan: Bernard Kester? Do you remember him?

Stocksdale: Yes, I knew him, but not as well as Kay knew him, because he was in fabrics and the textile design and that sort of thing.

Nathan: Right, he was at UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles].

Stocksdale: Yes. So he was actually a friend of Kay's, and I knew him that way.

Nathan: Paul Killinger, who had a wood trade?

Stocksdale: Yes, but I didn't know him really well enough to comment on him.

Nathan: Okay. Of course Sam Maloof.

Stocksdale: Who doesn't know Sam Maloof? [laughter]

Nathan: In your friendship, is there anything you think of that you gained from him and perhaps that he gained from you?

Stocksdale: Well, no. I've learned that I have no desire to run my business the way he runs his business. [laughter]

Nathan: That's important.

Stocksdale: Even though he's probably ten times richer than I am. I know when to quit work, and he doesn't. He just works right through the weekend and everything. It's ridiculous, really, because he doesn't need the money, and he just feels that he has to make furniture for everybody in the country that comes for it.

Nathan: I see. That's an interesting insight.

Stocksdale: Yes. [laughs] Poor guy.

Nathan: I'm looking at a Sam Maloof chair right now, that rocking chair.

Stocksdale: Yes, and you're sitting in one.

Nathan: Right. I'll pay more attention to the furniture. His chairs are so pleasing.

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: Of course, Signe Mayfield, who was the curator at the Palo Alto Cultural Center.

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: How did you meet?

Stocksdale: We knew her before she took that job, when she was with a different gallery in San Francisco. She was curator of a gallery in San Francisco, and so we got acquainted with her then. And then when she went to Palo Alto, we kept in touch. She is the one that conceived the idea of us having a show. I keep telling her that she's the one that made us famous.

Nathan: [laughs] Well, she did such a great job, and of course, she can write, too.

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: Marvelous attribute to have. And there's a man named Ed Moulthrop.

Stocksdale: Yes. We're friends; we go to see him if we happen to be in Atlanta, and he comes to see us if he happens to be here. But only as a sort of duty, you know, being in the same field more or less.

Nathan: How about George Nakashima?

Stocksdale: Yes, George, I have a lot of respect for George. It was only in his last four or five years that I got acquainted with him, and he was quite friendly with us and went out of his way to come see us when he was out here. We went to visit him then, and we were only sorry that we didn't get acquainted earlier in life.

Nathan: Was he a wood turner?

Stocksdale: No, he wasn't. He didn't do any wood turning. He was just a furniture maker and furniture designer.

Nathan: Right. You have already mentioned James Prestini. I have the names of Dorothy and George Saxe, collectors. Are these people you know?

Stocksdale: They're collectors of my work, and some of Kay's too. They're really big-time collectors. They have a lot of money they made in real estate, so they are collectors of other things too, like glass. They have an utterly fantastic collection of glass, blown glass. In fact, they have an apartment in San Francisco that is just mostly for the glass to show. They live in Menlo Park, and there they have a lot of other things, by fiber artists, and Kay has some pieces there. But the major wood collection is my work that they have. They probably have--I forget now--I think he said they had around fifty pieces of mine in their collection.

Nathan: How did they find you in the first place?

Stocksdale: Oh, well, word gets around, I guess.

Nathan: I guess. [laughs] It's the best possible way.

Stocksdale: And they just started coming. They got to the place where Mrs. Saxe would say, "Well, George has to come up for a fix." [laughter]

Nathan: Oh, that's wonderful. You're a controlled substance, I gather. [laughs] So he comes up for a fix and goes home with some beautiful bowl.

Stocksdale: Yes. [laughs]

Nathan: They sound wonderful. There is a name of George W. [William] Stocksdale. Is that--

Stocksdale: That's my oldest brother.

Nathan: I see. Michael Stone? His was the book on contemporary American woodworkers.

Stocksdale: Yes, that was quite an honor, to be selected as the only wood turner in that book. The rest of them were all furniture makers.

Nathan: That's really remarkable, isn't it?

Stocksdale: Yes. As I remember, George Nakashima was one of the ten in that book, you know, and Sam and Alfreda and Kay and I--

Nathan: You mentioned that Alfreda is Sam Maloof's wife?

Stocksdale: Yes. We went to George Nakashima's for a visit. I think we were there for a meal or something. He had fifty copies of the Stone book--[laughter] and he wanted both of us to sit down and sign them, so we spent our whole time signing those books instead of going around to the compound there and seeing all the sights. We wanted to see his woodshop and his collection. He had a fabulous collection of lumber that he had collected over the years. He still has it there, and every so often, they get a special commission for a real special table, for instance, and they'll go out and select one of these huge planks, you know, real wide, and make a table out of that one plank. He had wood that he had bought in India and England and had it all sawed up and shipped there to New Hope, Pennsylvania. That's where his place is.

Nathan: That's a nice story. All right, we have, let's see, Kenneth Trapp. I see that Kenneth Trapp was the curator of Decorative Arts at the Oakland Museum. Was he the one before Tran Turner?

Stocksdale: He was, but now he's at the Renwick in Washington, D.C. Yes. So that's quite an upgrade. We've see him just briefly once since he took that job; he wasn't there when our show was there.

Nathan: I was wondering about that. Is he particularly interested in wood and wood turning?

Stocksdale: Not really, but he was there at the Oakland Museum when my biggest collector, Norman Anderson in La Jolla, gave the museum twenty-four of my pieces. They put twelve of them out on display for over six months there at the entrance of the art section. Anyway.

Nathan: Oh, that's wonderful. I have Adrian Wilson, who is a fine printer. Do you know him?

Stocksdale: Adrian was in the Conscientious Objector camps too, and I knew of him when he was in the camp, but I didn't know him personally, because he was in a different camp. I got acquainted with him, though, shortly after, when he settled here in the Bay Area and he started Interplayers. Then he had his own print shop and so on. So we'd see each other quite often.

Nathan: There were a lot of talented people in those circles?

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: Helen Winnemore we spoke about a little earlier, when she found you quite early, didn't she?

Stocksdale: Yes. She was actually my first commercial customer. That was when I was still in the C.O. camp. I got acquainted with her in Michigan in the first camp I was in. As I told you, she was the one that inspired me to disregard everything but quality. She wanted quality. She didn't care what it costs or anything else.

Nathan: That was something you could accept as part of your own creed?

Stocksdale: Yes.

Nathan: So is it fair to say that she was a major influence too?

Stocksdale: Yes, she was. I would get these wonderful, wonderful letters from her.

Nathan: Do you still have any of the letters? I know it's not a fair question, but if you do happen to find any correspondence, that's very eloquent and it would be an accompaniment to the memoir.

Stocksdale: Kay might have some of them in a file upstairs. See, she's here, she's out there in the garden.

Nathan: So if you have the chance and think you would like to, I think those letters sometimes can be very helpful in understanding an artist's work, the way she sees the work.

Stocksdale: Yes. She would say the shop is not the same without some of your pieces.

Nathan: Interesting life, though, sounds like. Do you want to speak of Yoshiko Uchida?

Stocksdale: Yes. [She is a good writer. In the early 50's she wrote a statement for me to give to customers, and she was the first to write a criticism of my work, an article. She also wrote the paragraphs for the four pictures that appear in a folder on my work.]

What It Takes to Be a Wood-Turner

Nathan: I think this is about my list. When you read it over, you may think of other people you'd like to comment about. For the future, would you have any advice for people who like to work with wood, who would like to think about being wood turners?

Stocksdale: No. Just the big advice I have is first, in order to work with wood, you have to be mechanically inclined. You have to have a lot of mechanical ability to start with, to not only set up your shop but to repair tools and figure out jigs and things like that that require a little ingenuity and so on. You can't just do it without having that ability. The best teacher is yourself. You have to learn, trial and error. I know there's not another one of these 6,000 people that turn wood like I do, and I don't turn wood like any of them do. But I don't think my method is the greatest.

Nathan: But it suits you.

Stocksdale: I ruin bowls too. I got one down in the shop now that I turned right through the bottom. And I gave it to the doctor I told you about. It was a bowl that if I had finished, I would have gotten $750 for it. Well, he left it sitting on the work bench, and then I got to thinking about it. I finally dreamed up a method of repairing that hole.

Nathan: Did you?

Stocksdale: I'll take you down and show it to you.

Nathan: Oh, great. Well, I think this is a very fine way to stop.

Stocksdale: All right.

Nathan: Thank you for these generous interviews. They are an eloquent account of your own interest in tools and fine woods, and the way you have used the wood lathe as a tool for art. Thank you for creating the many Stocksdale bowls, both hard-used salad bowls and the more delicate decorative bowls, and your standing invitation to touch and enjoy them.

##

Transcriber: Shannon Page
Final Typist: Caroline Sears

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Bob Stocksdale
2145 Oregon Street
Berkeley, California 94705

Home & Studio
510/843-7954

Birthplace: Warren, Indiana, 1913 **Education:** Self-taught

Selected Awards and Honors
Gold Medal, American Crafts Council, 1995
California Living Treasures , 1985
Fellow, American Crafts Council, 1978

Selected Collections
American Crafts Museum, New York, New York
Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona
Detroit Art Institute, Detroit, Michigan
Fine Arts Museum of the South, Mobile, Alabama
High Museum, Atlanta, Georgia
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts
Newark Museum, Newark, New Jersey
Oakland Museum, Oakland, California
Parnham House, Dorset, England
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Pinto Collection, Birmingham, England
Renwick Gallery of The National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC
Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh, Scotland
Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, Ohio

Selected Solo and Two Person Exhibitions
Marriage in Form: Kay Sekimachi & Bob Stocksdale, Palo Alto Cultural Center, Palo Alto, California, 1993 Travel Venue:
The Arkansas Arts Center Decorative Art Museum, Little Rock, Arkansas, 1994
The Forum for Contemporary Art, St. Louis, Missouri, 1994
Tampa Museum of Art, Tampa, Florida, 1995
Renwick Gallery of The National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, 1995
American Crafts Museum, New York, New York, 1995
Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island, 1995
Bowls, Kay Sekimachi & Bob Stocksdale, Volcano Art Center Gallery, Hawaii National Park, Hawaii, 1994
Bob Stocksdale, Oakland Museum, Oakland, California, 1993
Bob Stocksdale, Newark Museum, Newark, New Jersey 1992
Forms of Grace, Kay Sekimachi & Bob Stocksdale, Beelke Gallery, Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana, 1991
Side By Side in Tokyo, Contemporary Fine Arts, Tokyo, Japan, 1985
Bob Stocksdale, Renwick Gallery of The National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, 1973
Bob Stocksdale, St. Louis Craft Alliance Gallery, St. Louis, Missouri, 1970
Bob Stocksdale--Wood Turnings, Museum of Contemporary Crafts, New York, New York, 1965
Bob Stocksdale, Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, California, 1958

Selected Group Exhibitions
Studio Craft Movement 1945-1965, American Crafts Museum, New York, New York, 1997-1998
Masterpieces in Wood: The Wornick Collection, Oakland Museum, Oakland, California, 1997
Four Decades of Discovery, American Crafts Museum, New York, New York, 1996
Conservation by Design, Workers Alliance for Rainforest Protection, Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island, 1993-1994

Contemporary Craft & The Saxe Collection, The Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, Ohio, 1993, Newark Harbor Art Museum, Newport Beach, California, 1994
The Robin & John Horn Collection, Arrowmont, Gatlinberg, Tennessee, 1994
World Turning Center Exhibition, Hagley Museum, Wilmington, Delaware, 1993
Out of the Woods, Fine Arts Museum of the South, Mobile, Alabama, 1992: Europe tour, 1993-1997
Heirlooms of the Future: Masterworks of the West Coast American Designer/Craftsmen, Mingei International Museum, La Jolla, California, 1993
Revolving Techniques, James Michener Art Museum, Doylestown, Pennsylvania, 1992
Artful Objects: Recent American Crafts, Fort Wayne Museum of Art, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 1989
International Turned Objects Show (ITOS), US tour, 1988-1992
The Eloquent Object, Philbrook Art Center, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1987 US tour 1987-1989; Japan tour, 1989-1990
Craft Today, USA, American Crafts Museum, New York, New York, 1986; Europe tour, 1989-1993
USIA, Design in America, Eastern European tour, 1986-1989
The Art of Turned Wood Bowls, Jacobson Collection Show, Phoenix, Arizona, 1985
Wood Turning Vision & Concept, Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, Gatlinburg, Tennessee, 1985
California Crafts XIV: Living Treasures of California, Crocker Art Gallery, Sacramento, California, 1985
The Art of Woodturning, American Craft, New York, New York, 1983
Art for Use, American Crafts Council, Lake Placid, New York, New York, 1980
American Crafts, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1977
California Design, VII-XI, Pasadena Art Museum, Pasadena, California, 1964-68
Craftmanship in a Changing World, Museum of Contemporary Crafts, New York, New York, 1965
Good Design, Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York, 1960
Triennale, Milan, Italy, 1960
Craftmanship in a Changing World, Inaugural Exhibition, Museum of Contemporary Crafts, New York, New York, 1959
Brussels World's Fair, Brussels, Belgium, 1958

Workshops & Woodturning Seminars

Black Country Woodworks, Newtown, Pennsylvania, 1993
World Turning Conference, Wilmington, Delaware, 1993
Demonstration and show, Southern California Woodworking Conference, Harvey Mudd College, Claremont, California, 1986, 1988 & 1989
Slide lecture to woodworkers in Wajima, Japan
Demonstration, Washington, DC & Baltimore Woodworkers Group, Washington, DC, 1983
Artist-in-Residence, Haystack Mountain school of Crafts, Deer Isle, Maine, 1983
Museum II American Craft "Meet the Artist Series," New York, New York, 1983
Renwick Gallery of The National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, 1983
Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island, 1980
"Excellence in Wood," Chicago, Illinois, 1980
Wood Turning Symposium, George School, Newtown, Pennsylvania, 1980
International Seminar for Woodturners, Parnham House, Dorset, England, 1980
Wood Symposium, University of California, Berkeley, California, 1979 & 1980
Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona, 1979
Cutting Edge, Los Angeles, California, 1979
Wood Symposium, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 1976,1978 & 1979
Seventeen day demonstration, Los Angeles County Fair, Pomona, California, 1952

Affiliations

American Crafts Council
Honorary Member, California Contemporary Craft Association

Selected Publications

Saylan, Merryll, "Bob Stocksdale, Profiled Woodturning," *Journal of the Guild of Master Craftsmen*, (January/February, 1993)

Marriage in Form: Kay Sekimachi & Bob Stocksdale, Exhibition Catalogue, Essays by Signe Mayfield, Sam Maloof, and Jack Lenor Larsen, Palo Alto Cultural Center, Palo Alto, California, 1993

McAlpine, Daniel, "More than Meets the Eye in Stocksdale's Simple Turnings", *Woodshop News*, (December, 1992)

Three American Master Craftmen, Rude Olsolnik, Ed Moulthrop, and Bob Stocksdale, Video, United States Information Agency, 1992

Duncan, Robert Bruce, "Bob Stocksdale: Still on a Roll at 75," *Woodwork*, (Premier Issue Spring, 1989)

La Trobe-Bateman, Richard, "World-Class Turner," *American Craft*, (December, 1987/ January, 1988)

Manhart, Marcia and Tom, *The Eloquent Object*, Tulsa, Oklahoma: The Philbrook Museum of Art, 1987

Stone, Michael, *Contemporary American Woodworkers*, Salt Lake City, Utah: Gibbs M. Smith, Inc., 1986

Jacobson, Edward, *The Art of Turned-Wood Bowls*, New York: E. P. Dutton, 1985

Smith, Paul J., *Craft Today: Poetry of the Physical*, New York: American Craft Council, 1986

Fine Woodworking Techniques, Selected by the Editors from Fine Woodworking, Newtown, Connecticut: Taunton Press, 1978

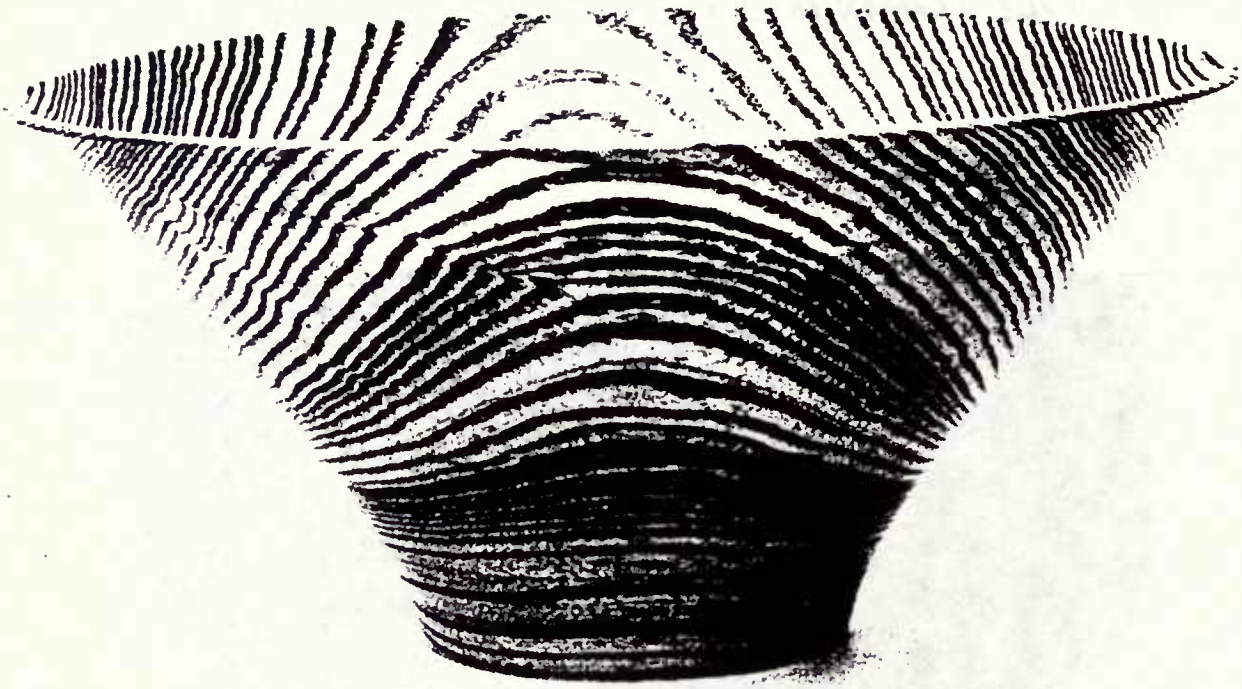
The Craftsman in America, Washington, DC: National Geographic Society, 1975

Nordness, Lee, *Objects: USA*, New York: Viking Press, 1970

Wood Turnings by Bob Stocksdale, New York: Museum of Contemporary Crafts of the American Craftsmen's Council, 1969

8" Black Walnut

WOOD TURNINGS BY BOB STOCKSDALE



3 ½ x 6 ½" Bocote mexico

Although Bob Stocksdale modestly calls himself a woodlathe artisan, many of the pieces of woodwork he has produced over the past twenty years might very properly be called works of art. They bespeak the close relationship of the craftsman to his material. Completely self-taught, Bob Stocksdale has both an unerring eye and an intuitive feel for the material, enabling him to develop the full potential of every piece of wood with which he works. When he takes up a piece of wood, his primary thought is to bring out all the natural beauty of that particular piece, rather than to manipulate the material to conform with a preconceived idea. Each piece of wood is allowed to dictate its own shape, texture and finish, so that form follows the natural characteristics of the wood, leading to full development and exposure of the grain. The finish of each piece is also adapted to the nature of the wood and the ultimate use of the object. Salad bowls, for example, are finished simply with mineral oil, while other pieces are finished with wax, lacquer, tung oil or polyurethane varnish. In all of Stocksdale's work one senses a complete unity of material, form and technique, and the result is both excellence and appropriateness of design.

5 x 6" Rosewood - Brazil

A native of Indiana, Bob Stocksdale began to work with wood while living on his father's farm there. His early efforts centered around antique and furniture repair work. He did not produce his first lathe-turned bowl until he was interned in a Conscientious Objector's camp during World War II, where he taught woodwork to fellow internees. Today, in Berkeley, California, where he has lived since 1945, Stocksdale is a full-time craftsman operating out of his home. He uses fourteen different woodworking machines and has worked with over forty varieties of hard wood from all parts of the world. He is equally at home with such woods as rosewood from India and Brazil, harewood from England, ash from Japan, balsam from South America, zebrawood from Africa and coralline from India, as well as with such native California woods as black walnut and redwood. He takes great delight in scouting for rare woods, finding them at auctions or ship repair yards, or in various dismantling ventures.

4½ x 7 Koa Hawaii

The major part of Stockdale's work now consists of both functional and decorative bowls, platters and trays, although he has made a variety of small wood objects, and occasionally does commissioned pieces if he finds the request sufficiently challenging. His work has been shown in many museums across the country, and two of his bowls were included in the American exhibition of the 1958 Brussels World's Fair. He has won numerous prizes, and his work has been recognized nationally for its beautifully grained wood, for its superior workmanship, and for its fine design.

Yoshiko Uchida
Oakland, California

January 25 through March 16, 1969

Museum of Contemporary Crafts of the American Craftsmen's Council, 29 West 53rd Street, New York City

THE INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART
Department of Design in Industry
138 Newbury Street
Boston 16, Massachusetts

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR DESIGNERS

The Institute of Contemporary Art, a non-profit, educational organization, would appreciate your filling out and returning the attached questionnaire, which is being given wide distribution among designers. The information which you send us will be placed in our designers' register. This register will be useful, we believe, to designers, manufacturers and retailers, as well as to craftsmen, educators, museum directors and the Institute's new Department of Design in Industry.

The Department is presently serving in an advisory capacity in design matters to several companies: Corning Glass Works, Corning, New York, in the field of mass-produced goods; Steuben Glass, Inc., New York City, manufacturers of fine hand-blown glass; and Reed and Barton, Taunton, Mass., silverware manufacturers. It plans shortly to become active in the ceramics, furniture, textile and carpet industries, advising an outstanding manufacturer in each of these fields. Through such activity, the Institute hopes to be instrumental in the development of an informal association of manufacturers committed to the consolidation of good design in every product which finds its way into the American home.

The Department's activities include surveys of design within a given industry, procurement and training of design personnel for manufacturers, consultation in design problems, analyses of consumer and retail attitude toward design, and the endorsement, exhibition and publication of well-designed products. The Department's facilities, including the designers' register, are available to educators, manufacturers, retailers, and industrial designers; the Department also maintains a library and design reference file to which the public has access.

Recognizing a need for the professional counsel of eminent authorities in design, education, and industry in the expansion of its services, the Department of Design in Industry has formed an Advisory Committee. Among the members of the Committee, which will be enlarged, are Marcel Breuer, architect; Serge Chermayeff, President, Institute of Design, Chicago; Brig. Gen. Georges F. Doriot, President, American Research and Development Corp. and Prof. of Manufacturing, Harvard Business School; Alfred M. Frankfurter, Editor, ART NEWS; Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., Consultant on Industrial Design, Museum of Modern Art, New York; Professors Robert W. Kennedy and Gyorgy Kepes, M.I.T. School of Architecture and Planning; Professors Eliot Noyes and John M. Phillips, Yale School of Fine Arts; and Walter Sanders, architect and teacher.

If you will fill out and return to us the questionnaire, listing the names and addresses of other designers whom we should not overlook, we shall be grateful for your assistance.

Respectfully,

Theodore S. Jones

Theodore S. Jones, Director
Department of Design in Industry

MAR 31 1949

THE DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS

Detroit 2, Michigan

ARTS COMMISSION — EDGAR L. WHITCOMB, *President* — MRS. EDSEL B. FORD — K. T. KELLER — ROBERT H. TANNAHILL

EDGAR P. RICHARDSON, *Director*

an exhibition **for modern living**

september - 11 to november - 20 1949

April 19, 1949

Mr. Bob Stocksdale
2145 Oregon Street
Berkeley 5, California

Dear Mr. Stocksdale:

On September 11, 1949, The Detroit Institute of Arts will open to the public an important exhibition entitled "For Modern Living", whose aim will be to present to the public a series of dramatic exhibits of home furnishings and articles of modern design. It will demonstrate how much modern design of the highest standard contributes to the better understanding and enjoyment of modern living.

The exhibition is made possible through the cooperation of The J. L. Hudson Company, Detroit, and it is expected to have national, as well as local, importance. A booklet announcing the show and describing it in detail is now being printed, and soon you will receive a copy.

Your interest and products, in the field of modern design, have come to our attention, and we would like to seriously consider those of your products which may lend themselves to the exhibition needs and available space

We would like to receive in duplicate, as quickly as possible, catalogs, photographs, samples, and/or other descriptive data on those items listed on the attached sheet. Please send these to my attention, at 379 Fisher Road, Grosse Pointe 30, Michigan.

Later, you will be advised as to which of your products the committee would like to include in the exhibition.

Cordially yours,

Alexander H. Girard,
Director of Exhibition

executive committee
edgar p. richardson · chairman
alexander girard a·i·a · director
le roy e. kiefer
william d. laurie jr.
eero saarinen a·i·a
minoru yamasaki a·i·a

THE DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS

Detroit 2, Michigan

ARTS COMMISSION — EDGAR P. WHITCOMB, *President* — MRS. EDSEL B. FORD — K. T. KELLER — ROBERT H. TANNAHILL

EDGAR P. RICHARDSON, *Director*

an exhibition **for modern living**

september - 11 to november - 20 1949

May 9, 1949

Mr. Bob Stocksdale
2145 Oregon Street
Berkeley 5, California

Dear Mr. Stocksdale:

Thank you for sending your descriptive data recently requested in connection with the exhibition "FOR MODERN LIVING". As soon as we are able to study all of the material received, we shall advise which of your products we would like to include in the exhibition.

There will be no charge to you for space, construction costs, publicity, or other expenses. However, each manufacturer whose products are selected is asked to furnish them on a loan basis, to pay shipping costs both ways, and, if desired, to insure his products for the loan period. Each contributing exhibitor will be given proper credit and recognition in the literature for exhibition visitors.

When products are selected, a requisition containing all of the necessary data to identify each exhibit will be sent to you, along with any other details you should have.

Cordially yours,

Alexander H. Girard

Alexander H. Girard
Director of Exhibition

please direct your reply to 379 fisher road, grosse pointe 30

executive committee

edgar p. richardson · chairman
alexander girard a·i·a · director

le roy e. kiefer
william d. laurie jr.
eero saarinen a·i·a
minoru yamasaki a·i·a

The Saint Paul Gallery and School of Art

476 SUMMIT AVENUE • SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA • DALE 2715

June 24, 1949

Mr. Bob Stocksdale
2145 Oregon St.
Berkeley, Cal.

My dear Mr. Stocksdale:

The aim of the Saint Paul Gallery and School of Art is to provide a center for the enjoyment and study of all things connected with the visual arts and to awaken an awareness of art.

In keeping with this concept, we established last fall the CRAFTSMAN'S MARKET where we exhibit and sell the best in jewelry, textiles, ceramics, glassware, wood work, and prints that is being made today by America's leading artist-craftsmen.

We recently saw a picture of a very beautiful salad set designed and produced by you. We wonder if you might be interested in submitting some of your work for exhibit and sale. At this time it is possible to accept work only on consignment, although in the future we shall prefer to make outright purchases. The basis for consignment is 75% of sales price to the artist and 25% to the Gallery.

We shall appreciate hearing from you in regard to the above at your early convenience.

Very truly yours

(mrs.) Sally Wells
Curator
CRAFTSMAN'S MARKET

sw

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

NEW YORK 19

11 WEST 53rd STREET
TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900
CABLES: MODERNART, NEW-YORK

DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN
PHILIP C. JOHNSON, DIRECTOR
PETER BLAKE, CURATOR

Mr. Bob Stocksdale
2145 Oregon Street
Berkeley 5, California

September 13, 1949

Dear Mr. Stocksdale:

We are planning to make our annual Christmas show of Useful Objects a selection from the Detroit Institute's exhibition, "for modern living". Since the Detroit show will continue for several months, we would like to ask you to lend us on memorandum charge a few examples of your fine wooden ware which are similar to those in the Detroit show, for possible inclusion in our show.

In view of the very short time which remains to organize this exhibition we would appreciate receiving your samples within fourteen days from this date. Please let us know if you can meet that deadline. When sending us your material would you tell us the design dates, the values, and the New York retail outlet where they may be obtained by the general public.

Please be assured that we will be most grateful for your cooperation in helping us to make this year's Christmas show a success.

Very sincerely yours,

Peter Blake,
Curator

PB:bh

AMERICA HOUSE

32 EAST FIFTY-SECOND STREET

NEW YORK 22, N. Y. PLAZA 3-0839

October 13, 1949

Mr. Bob Stocksdale
2145 Oregon St.
Berkeley 5, Calif.

Dear Mr. Stocksdale:-

Miss Wright is most anxious to know when we will receive another shipment of your wood. We need it at once.

It was very pleasant to talk with you on your trip to New York and do wish we had not been in such upheaval. Our new shop is exceptionally fine and hope you will be here again soon.

My best personal regards,

Sincerely,
Florence Eastmead
Florence Eastmead,
AMERICA HOUSE

FE:db

AKRON ART INSTITUTE 131

140 EAST MARKET STREET AKRON 8 OHIO

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MISS RUTH E. WHORL

November 22, 1949

Mr. Bob Stockdale
2145 Oregon Street
Berkeley 5, California

Dear Mr. Stockdale:

We are organizing, for February, an exhibition of the work of a small group of top American craftsmen-designers. Would you send us photographs of the typical pieces which you turn in wood, to be considered for this exhibition.

A couple of weeks back I was in Michigan. My people live near Circle Pine. My brother Bob took us over on a Saturday evening and we were surprised and delighted to see our old friend Waldo Kapnick. Kap was telling us that you had been there recently, and he had endless praise for your work.

There is another reason, also, that I would like to see photos of your work. We are buying service for the new museum building which opens in January. We need two large salad bowls around 18" in diameter. The committee that is raising the money would settle for the good old thick bowl which I admit is an honest bowl. I would like to see us have a more handsome piece,. so please send prices as well as photos on such a piece.

You can definitely consider this an invitation to the February show, and we could include 8 to 10 pieces. We are also asking Espenet in San Francisco, so our desire to see photographs is mainly an attempt to have the two groups compliment each other.

The exhibition will include the work of two designers in metal, two in wood, two in ceramics and two in fabrics. The dates of the showing are from January 31 to February 28, work must be received here by January 24. We will insure the work while at the Institute and pay transportation charges to us.

May we hear from you as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Luke Lietzke

(Miss) Luke Lietzke
Curator of Industrial
Design

THE J.L.HUDSON COMPANY

DETROIT 26, MICHIGAN

OFFICE OF
THE VICE PRESIDENT
AND
GENERAL MANAGER

December 2, 1949

Mr. Bob Stocksdale
2145 Oregon Street
Berkeley 5, California

Dear Mr. Stocksdale:

The exhibition "For Modern Living", which ended Sunday, November 20, after its ten-week showing at the Detroit Institute of Arts, was a complete success. 149,553 people visited the exhibit, which received enthusiastic plaudits, both national and local, from newspapers, magazines, trade journals and radio.

Such comments as, "It's a most unusual show", and "It's really wonderful!", were common throughout the ten weeks. Visitors saw hundreds of new and unusual objects, and received answers to many of their questions about the application of modern design to everyday living.

The exhibit would not have been possible without the enthusiastic support of the many manufacturers and designers who loaned their objects for the show; and we sincerely believe that everyone who participated feels as we do - that the event was highly successful and most worth-while.

On behalf of The J. L. Hudson Company, co-sponsors of the exhibition, and of the Detroit Institute of Arts and Mr. Alexander Girard, the exhibition director, may I express our deep appreciation for your interest and cooperation in helping to make this the most complete event of its kind which has ever been presented.

Sincerely,

James B. Webber Jr

James B. Webber, Jr.

JBW:s

courtyard: 2118 Massachusetts Ave. N. W. Washington 8, D.C. ADams 6131 **Don Wallance** Industrial Design

14 March 1950

Mr. Bob Stocksdale
2145 Oregon Street
Berkeley, California

Dear Mr. Stocksdale:

I am doing a study for the Walker Art Center and a number of other institutions. It is tentatively called "A Study of Design and Craftsmanship in Today's Products." The ultimate objective is a travelling exhibit and a publication. The project is more than an attempt to collect and exhibit well-designed objects. It will also show how these things got to be the way they are.

The material for this project is being obtained by means of a series of case studies of products selected for their outstanding excellence of design and workmanship.

I am planning to be in your territory early in April and would greatly appreciate an opportunity of visiting your shop and discussing your products.

If possible, I would appreciate a reply before the 24th. If you cannot reply before then, I would suggest writing to me care of Walker Art Center, Minneapolis 5, as I will stop there before going on to the coast.

Sincerely,

Don Wallance

DW/am

I recall meeting you at the Walker Art Center last summer.

EDITORIAL CONTEMPORA

SOC. DE RESP. LTDA. — CAP. $ 51.000.—

SARMIENTO 643 (R. 30)
BUENOS AIRES
REPUBLICA ARGENTINA

EDITORES DE:
NUESTRA ARQUITECTURA (REVISTA PROFESIONAL)
CASAS Y JARDINES (REVISTA PARA EL HOGAR)
EL CATALOGO ROJO (COLECCION DE CATALOGOS ARQUITECTONICOS)
LIBROS DE ARQUITECTURA, URBANISMO Y DECORACION DE INTERIORES

TELEFONOS:
31, RETIRO 1893
31, RETIRO 2574

Buenos Aires, March 17th 1950.

Mr. Bob Stocksdale,
2145 Oregon Street,
BERKELEY, Cal. USA.

Dear Sir:-

In our quality of editors of the magazines Casas y Jardines and Nuest Arquitectura, we are interested in acquainting our readers with the b specimens of modern artistical objects for the home.-

Through the kind information of Mr. Bill Brewer of Van Keppel Green, have learned that you are the creator of wooden plates, bowls, etc., we would like to ask you to kindly send us some photos of your works being published in our magazines.-

In case there exists no inconvenience for your acceding our request, would ask you to accompany the graphic material, by all data that cou be necessary for the better guidance of our readers.-

Thanking you in anticipation for the kind attention you may bestow on our request, we avail of these lines for remaining

Very cordially yours,

Walter Hylton Scott.

AMERICA HOUSE

485 MADISON AVENUE at 52nd ST.

NEW YORK 22, N. Y. **PLAZA 3-0839**

September 15, 1950

Mr. Bob Stocksdale
2145 Oregon St.
Berkeley, Calif.

Dear Mr. Stocksdale:-

We have had very good success with the large size salad bowls in natural mahogany with the oil finish and wonder if you would send us some more.

Also, we would like to have some of the large black trays - 10, 12, 14 and 16. Will you send us about one-half dozen of each.

If you have the large salad bowl in anything but mahogany, they will do also. Will leave the selection up to you but would like to have another shipment of your goods sometime in October.

Sincerely yours,

Frances Wright

Frances Wright, Director
America House

FW:db

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

NEW YORK 19

11 WEST 53rd STREET
TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900
CABLES: MODERNART, NEW-YORK

December 5, 1950

Dear Mr. Stocksdale:

We would be grateful for any new items which you would like to submit to the second year of Good Design, 1951. On December 20 the Selection Committee will meet in Chicago to consider submissions; it is important to have as much material for them there at that time as possible. The exhibition itself will open on January 15. We hope that you will be able to cooperate with us.

Sample pieces, photos or drawings, all of which will be held in strict confidence, should be sent to:

Edgar Kaufmann, Jr.
Director, Good Design
11 Q
The Merchandise Mart
Chicago 54, Illinois

Sincerely yours,

Edgar Kaufmann, Jr.

Mr. Robert Stocksdale
2145 Oregon Street
Berkeley, Calif.

EDITORIAL CONTEMPORA

SOC. DE RESP. LTDA. — CAP. $ 51.000.—

SARMIENTO 643 (R. 30)
BUENOS AIRES
REPUBLICA ARGENTINA

EDITORES DE:
NUESTRA ARQUITECTURA (REVISTA PROFESIONAL)
CASAS Y JARDINES (REVISTA PARA EL HOGAR)
EL CATALOGO ROJO (COLECCION DE CATALOGOS ARQUITECTONICOS)
LIBROS DE ARQUITECTURA, URBANISMO Y DECORACION DE INTERIORES

TELEFONOS:
31, RETIRO 1893
31. RETIRO 2574

Buenos Aires, December 22, 1950

Mr. Bob Stocksdale
2145 Oregon Street
BERKELEY, California
EE.UU.

Dear Mr. Stocksdale:

We are forwarding you two copies of "Casas y Jardines" of the month of November last, in which we have published the photographs of your products, the presentation of which, as we believe, will result to your satisfaction.

Thanking you in anticipation for the kind attention you have shown us and may show us in future, I avail of these lines for being

Very cordially yours

E. Luis Muzio
Director of "Casas y Jardines"
Sarmiento 643-Buenos Aires
República Argentina

33 EAST 75 STREET NEW YORK 21 NEW DESIGN INC

STORE FOR CONTEMPORARY HOME FURNISHINGS RE 7-7408

INTERIOR PLANNING OFFICE TR 9-3190

August 21, 1951

Dear Mr. Stocksdale:

One our customers purchased a tray of yours made of Jenisero wood that was 20" in diameter and was so pleased with it that she would like to have 400 more by a year from this Christmas.

I know this is a very unusal request but we told her that we would find out if this project is possible. We here at New Design realize that each piece you do is very special but perhaps there is a way of doing this project. I forgot to mention that this women who owns a large business of some sort is going to use these trays as gifts for her employees.

If such a project could be done would there be a special price on an order of this size. We would appreciate hearing from you on this matter.

Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Lucille T Kann

Lucille T Kann

HB

HOUSE BEAUTIFUL MAGAZINE

572 Madison Avenue, New York 22

FROM THE EDITORIAL OFFICES

Dear Mr. Stockdale,

The bowl is just beautiful!
It's one of my most prized possessions.
When you're in New York do be
sure to call.

Enclosed please find check
for $21.12.

Cordially,
Jane Little

April 21, 1953.

Georg Jensen Inc.
667 Fifth Avenue
TELEPHONE PLAZA 1-2400
New York 22, N.Y.

October 26, 1953

Mr. Robert Stocksdale
2145 Oregon Street
Berkeley, California

Dear Mr. Stocksdale:

We want you to know how much we admired your exhibits at the Brooklyn Museum, and although we have written several times in the past, we are prompted once again to ask whether you are in a position to supply us with some of your things.

Please let us know what the possibilities are as we dont feel that our collection is quite complete without representing you.

Very truly yours,

GEORG JENSEN INC.

W. C. HUBLITZ
Merchandise Manager

WCH:da

Neiman-Marcus

DALLAS 1, TEXAS

November 4, 1953

Bob Stocksdale
2145 Oregon St.
Berkeley, California

Dear Bob:

Thank you very much for your letter last month and for the pair of shakers. I had said we couldn't order such a small amount but a persistant customer forced the issue when I had no open-to-buy; however, we've convinced her the one you sent is enough for her at the moment.

I'm going to be perfectly honest with you - your bowls are so beautiful, and we always have them prominently displayed, but we have difficulty convincing people that they should pay such prices for salad bowls. They're a strange breed here - they'll pay a fortune for a mink coat, but expect a salad bowl to cost from $5.00 to $10.00. Our salespeople love your bowls and play them up as much as possible, and it remains that we have much more of an educational job to do. We have no difficulty getting admiration of your bowls, its just price we have to counteract. It certainly isn't that they aren't worth the price, but convincing customers is another matter.

The bowl you sent the photograph of is magnificent and I would like to order four of them if they are still available (I have been in New York for the last two weeks, hence the delay). Will you let me know.

I shall certainly notify you the minute we start selling the remainder of our present stock of your things, as nothing pleases me more than promoting truly beautiful merchandise.

Ever sincerely,

Maggie Murchison

Margaret Murchison
Gift Buyer
The Galleries

bd

142
EDITORIAL ROOMS

Reply to
RD 1
Perkasie, Penna.

THE SATURDAY
EVENING
POST
FOUNDED BY
Benj. Franklin

ARTHUR W. BAUM
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

THE CURTIS
PUBLISHING COMPANY
PHILADELPHIA 5

November 9, 1953

Mr. Robert Stocksdale,
2145 Oregon Street,
Berkeley, California.

Dear Mr. Stocksdale:

I would appreciate it if you could write me a bit of information about your woodturning and any other handcraft activity which you practice for possible use in a handcraft article which we are preparing. Some time ago Aileen Webb told me that you had lived here in the east and practiced wood work as a spare time activity, and that you had then moved to California to devote your full time to wood turning. Is this correct?

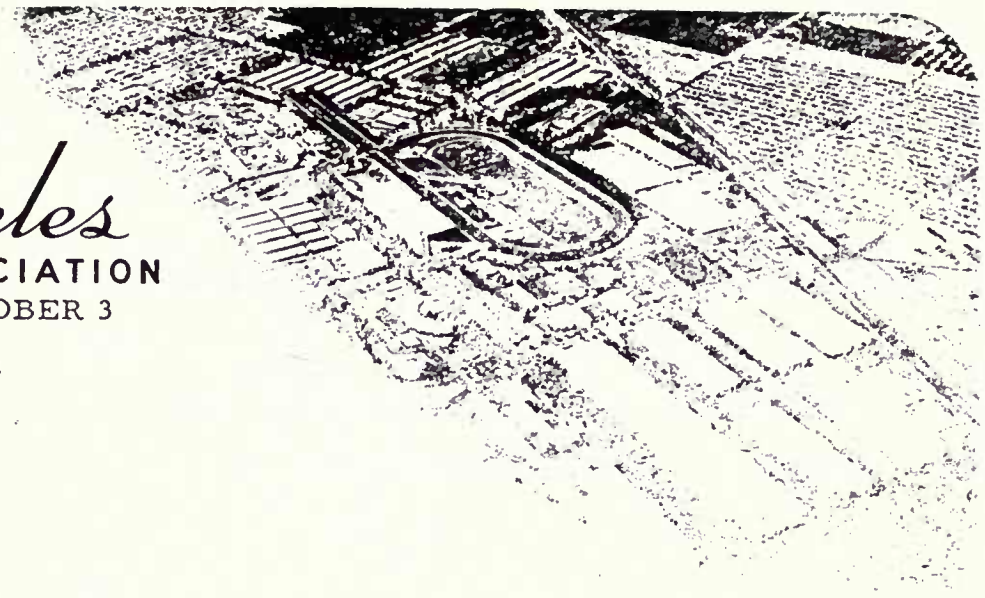
What sort of regular work were you in at the time your woodworking was a spare time activity, and where did you live? How did you first happen to take up wood turning? What sort of shop do you operate now in Berkeley? Wasn't the laminated plywood one-ended bookend that America House used to stock a product of yours? What in the world is harewood, out of which you made the beautiful platter now at Brooklyn Museum? Is the Berkeley shop working out to your satisfaction? Are you doing any teaching?

Thanks in advance for any sort of information such as this that you can send me, and since time is pushing us a little I'd appreciate as fast a reply as possible. You might include a description of your shop which would give us a clue to picture possibilities.

Sincerely,

Arthur W. Baum

AWB:SW



Los Angeles
COUNTY FAIR ASSOCIATION
SEPTEMBER 17 - OCTOBER 3
POMONA, CALIFORNIA

April 9, 1954

Dear Bob:

You are cordially invited to participate in what will be one of the most important exhibitions ever held in America, from the standpoint of the producing designer.

This will be a show in which complete architectural settings are built to serve as a stage in which we hope to present your very best work. In the words of Elizabeth Gordon, Editor of "House Beautiful", whose magazine has planned their major color issue of the year around this exhibition: "To use the work of artists and artisans integrated into architecture and furnishings and coordinated by an over-all designer so these enrichments are appropriate to the total solution."

We are sending this letter to a limited, highly selected group of artist-craftsmen who, like yourself, have demonstrated their ability in previous exhibitions here and elsewhere.

The Fair is happy to facilitate your participation in every way possible. We will pay Railway Express charges both ways, maintain sales facilities without commission, and arrange an unusually active program of publication including House Beautiful and the important Los Angeles Times Home Magazine.

Please indicate your intention to exhibit by returning the enclosed entry blank filled out as completely as possible, saving the duplicate to send in your package.

There are two deadlines: the first for available pieces is May 10th. The second deadline is July 10th, and we trust that this will give you time to design and make special pieces to represent you in a show to be seen firsthand by nearly a million people, and in reproduction by millions more!

Yours,

Edward Eddleman

May we have a <u>large</u> salad bowl for the kitchen (deadline June 15th.) Could any other pieces you think would be plentiful?

A C E C

32 EAST 52ND STREET NEW YORK 22, N. Y.

AMERICAN CRAFTSMEN'S EDUCATIONAL COUNCIL, INC.

PLAZA 3-9094

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January 11, 1955

Mr. Bob Stockdale
2145 Oregon Street
Berkeley, Calif.

Dear Mr. Stockdale:

The undersigned invite you to attend a conference to discuss the purpose and possible nature of a national organization to promote the interests of the craft arts and the relationship and responsibilities of the producing craftsmen to it.

Through the courtesy of Dr. Elisabeth Moses and the De Young Museum, the meeting will be held February 5 and 6 with a get together supper and discussion on Friday, February 4.

This meeting is the second to be held on this subject. The first was held last May and was an outgrowth of the problems which developed from the Designer-Craftsmen, U.S.A. 1953 Exhibition. This meeting was attended by representatives of museums, craft groups and craftsmen. After two days of discussion it asked three committees to report on the needs of craftsmen and possible services to be rendered them, and a fourth to present an overall plan for a national organization to implement these needs. The undersigned are the members of this committee.

We are definitely of the opinion that no report would be valid or bear weight without the complete approval and participation of producing professional craftsmen. Though there has been some discussion of varying plans, no decisions have been reached. This will therefore not be a meeting asking for a "rubber stamp" approval of already conceived plans, but an earnest effort to find the right answer to the many problems involved. It is being kept small and given little publicity for two reasons. First the possibility of better and freer discussion in a small group. Secondly the fact that the craftsmen of all three regions of the country should be as nearly as possible equally represented and the cost of transportation would make a large meeting of this kind almost prohibitive wherever it was held. As a service to the craftsmen involved and because of their deep belief in the need of such a conference, the A.C.E.C. is making a travel fund available for those who need to have their transportation met.

Mr. Bob Stockdale - 2 - January 11, 1955

We hope to have the pleasure of your presence at the meeting and the benefit of your advice. Please let us know as soon as possible if you can attend. If you need transportation please check your preference on the enclosed slip and return it to us. Looking forward to having you with us,

Yours sincerely,

Aileen O. Webb - AOW -

Planning Committee:
Aileen O. Webb, Secretary
Michael Higgins, Chairman
David R. Campbell
Meyric R. Rogers
Arthur Pulos
Elisabeth Moses

AOW:AD
Enc.

Neiman-Marcus

DALLAS 1. TEXAS

March 26, 1955

Mr. Bob Stocksdale
2145 Oregon
Berkley, California

Dear Mr. Stocksdale:-

First, I should like to tell you what truly outstanding work you do. For a number of years, I have admired your things, and it is a great pleasure to be in charge of the department which handles them.

We have a customer who feels the same way about your work as I do, and he is anxious to have one, or possibly two, rectangular mahogany trays, 16 by 28 inches, as thin as possible, and very dark wood. I am sure that he wants the same feeling in this tray as one gets in your thin well-shaped bowls with just enough convexity at the edge to give the feeling of the tray rather than a flat piece of wood. Is it possible for you to make such an item for us, and, if so, what would the price be? Your prompt reply will be greatly appreciated.

Incidentally, we would appreciate any current information on the work you are doing, and those items which comprise your line. Have you any photographs?

Very sincerely yours,

John Luten

JOHN GREENLEE LUTEN
Buyer
Gift Galleries

JGL/mes

DEPARTMENT OF ART
College of Fine and Applied Arts
University of Illinois, Urbana

May 3, 1955

Mr. Bob Stockdale
2145 Oregon Street
Berkeley, California

Dear Bob:

I should like to take this opportunity to thank you for your participation in our recent Festival of Contemporary Arts exhibition of the work of American Craftsmen.

The exhibition was very well received and its showing here was abetted by radio and television programs and by joint meetings on the campus of the Illinois Art Education Association and Midwest Designer-Craftsmen.

Several pieces were sold locally from the exhibition and the committee of selection has requested and been granted funds with which to purchase the following items for its permanent collection of contemporary decorative arts:

#44 Charles Lakofsky bowl
#51 Harvey Littleton bowl
#72 Ed Rossbach fabric
#75 Mary Scheier tea set
#81 Azalea Thorpe fabric
#85 Robert Turner jar
#99 Ellamarie Wooley panel
#100 Jackson Wooley panel

Your work is now packed and ready to go on tour for a year under auspices of the Smithsonian Institution. For this period it will be under the care of Mr. Roy Ginstrom of this department and Mrs. Annamarie Pope of the Smithsonian Exhibition Service.

I am enclosing a copy of the catalogue and should like to express my appreciation again for your support and cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Arthur

Arthur J. Pulos
Associate Professor of Art

P/j

BONNIERS

605 MADISON AVENUE NEW YORK 22, N. Y. TELEPHONE PLAZA 9-7985

January 21, 1957

Mr. Bob Stockdale
2145 Oregon Street
Berkeley 5, California

Dear Mr. Stockdale:

I was very glad to meet you and to see the fine work you are doing in wood.

This is to remind you that I will be interested in receiving three of the very big walnut bowls, 18 inches in diameter and 7 inches high. You indicated the price to be about $40 each. And also I would like twenty-four of the individual salad bowls like the sample you showed me. The price for these, you told me, was $2.50 each.

There is no great rush but if I could have these sometime in April, it would be very good.

With kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

Goran F. Holmquist

gfh:hm

HENRY GALLERY

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON • SEATTLE

SEPTEMBER 10, 1957

MR. BOB STOCKDALE
2145 OREGON STREET
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

DEAR MR. STOCKDALE:

AT THE SUGGESTION OF MR. DAVID CAMPBELL I AM WRITING TO ASK IF YOU WOULD BE GENEROUS ENOUGH TO LEND ONE OF YOUR PIECES OF WOOD TO A SPECIAL EXHIBITION TO BE HELD IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE FIRST STATE-WIDE MEETING OF THE NEWLY ORGANIZED WASHINGTON ARTS AND CRAFTS ASSOCIATION. THIS ORGANIZATION IS PATTERNED AFTER THAT OF NEW HAMPSHIRE, AND IT IS OUR HOPE THAT IT WILL HAVE AS GOOD RESULTS.

IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE MEETING, THE PURPOSE OF WHICH IS TO EXPLAIN THE ORGANIZATION TO AS MANY CRAFTSMEN, STUDENTS, AND MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC AS POSSIBLE, WE PLAN TO HAVE A NUMBER OF EXHIBITS AND DEMONSTRATIONS WHICH WILL INCREASE INTEREST IN CRAFT WORK AND SHOW THE MANY POSSIBILITIES OF CONTEMPORARY CRAFTS.

AT FIRST WE THOUGHT OF ROUNDING UP AS MANY PRIZE-WINNING PIECES FROM RECENT NATIONAL EXHIBITIONS AS POSSIBLE, BUT THIS PROVED TO BE IMPRACTICAL. THE NEXT IDEA WAS TO INVITE THE PEOPLE WHO WON PRIZES TO SEND PIECES OF THEIR CHOICE.

I HOPE YOU WILL BE ABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE EXHIBITION AND WILL SEND A PIECE WHICH YOU CONSIDER TO BE ONE OF YOUR BEST. THE WORK SHOULD BE SHIPPED TO ME COLLECT IN CARE OF THE HENRY GALLERY. THE EXHIBIT OPENS IN ELLENSBURG, WASHINGTON ON OCTOBER 11 AND WILL CONTINUE FOR THREE DAYS. FOLLOWING THIS THE WORK WILL BE BROUGHT TO THE HENRY GALLERY FOR EXHIBITION DURING NOVEMBER. FRANKLY, I HOPE TO SELL ALL THE THINGS IN THE SHOW, BUT IF NOT THE PIECE WILL BE RETURNED TO YOU SOMETIME IN DECEMBER. NO COMMISSION WILL BE CHARGED ON SALES AND THE PIECE WILL BE INSURED FOR ITS FULL VALUE.

THANKS FOR CONSIDERING THIS REQUEST. WILL YOU PLEASE LET ME KNOW IF YOU CAN PARTICIPATE.

YOURS VERY TRULY,

GERVAIS REED
GR:L

ALBRIGHT ART GALLERY
BUFFALO 22, NEW YORK
Telephone: LIncoln 0848

20th Century Design: U.S.A.

The Albright Art Gallery in Buffalo announces that in April 1959 it will open a major exhibition, entitled 20th Century Design: U.S.A. This will then be shown during 1959-60 at the following co-sponsoring art museums: The Cleveland Museum of Art, City Art Museum of St. Louis, The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, San Francisco Museum of Art, Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, Portland Art Museum, and The Dayton Art Institute.

The exhibition is a timely one. It will not only show present-day accomplishments but will review critically the creative productivity of the past half-century in American design and focus attention on those articles that might be termed the "classics" of the period. For the most part, the exhibition will consist of those articles that have been on the American scene continuously since 1955, or before, and are still currently in production. It is not yet known how many hundreds of articles there will be in the exhibition. Each article selected will be a masterpiece in one of the various categories of furniture and home furnishings, household appliances, business machines, scientific apparatus, sports equipment, toys, personal articles and luggage, and many others.

Many articles will be included that are no longer in production; these will be shown because they are important prototypes or landmarks in the historical process. Likewise -- although the focus will be on manufactured objects for quantity production and large-scale use -- many unique hand-made objects will be included because of their historical significance or relevance to the 20th Century American tradition.

Articles for the exhibition are being assembled from private sources and museum collections, as well as from the factories and showrooms of American industry and the workshops of designer-craftsmen throughout the nation.

To organize the exhibition and prepare the accompanying illustrated monograph and catalog, the Albright Art Gallery has appointed William Friedman as Visiting Curator of Design for 1958-59. Mr. Friedman, until recently Professor of Design at Indiana University, has served as Consultant on Design to the Art Institute of Chicago and Stanford Research Institute. From 1944 to 1952, he was Associate Director of Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, where he was in charge of exhibitions and publications.

December 1958

LONG BEACH MUSEUM OF ART

2300 EAST OCEAN BOULEVARD, LONG BEACH 3, CALIFORNIA

JEROME ALLAN DONSON, DIRECTOR GENEVA 9-2119

March 12, 1959

Mr. Robert Stocksdale
2147 Oregon
Berkeley 5, California

Dear Mr. Stocksdale:

I want to express our appreciation for your fine exhibition. It was a pleasure having your work at the Museum and we shall continue enjoying the items in the collection.

Due to installation of the new exhibition and our general state of lots of work and no time, your exhibition was shipped today by Railway Express. I am sorry for the delay, but this was the earliest we could pack and arrange for pickup.

We have held out the compote for the lady from LaCanada, but as yet, we have not heard from her. If she corresponds with you, please notify her that we are holding the compote for her pickup at the Museum.

I hope all arrives in good condition, as it was carefully packed and checked.

Thank you again for the excellent exhibition and accept our best wishes for the future.

Sincerely,

Jerome Donson

JAD:amd

Jerome Allan Donson
Director

ARTS OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

THE BUFFALO FINE ARTS ACADEMY
ALBRIGHT ART GALLERY
BUFFALO 22, NEW YORK

18 March 1959

Mr. Bob Stocksdale
2145 Oregon Street
Berkeley 5, California

Dear Mr. Stocksdale:

As you know, we are organizing the forthcoming exhibition, 20th Century Design: U.S.A. A major portion of the exhibition consists of factory-produced articles for large-scale use. These are lent directly by the manufacturers. Most of these articles have been in continuous production for three to sixty years or more and are currently available on the market.

We have selected a few designer-craftsmen whose work we consider to be of great significance. Because we consider you one of those who has made an important contribution to the 20th Century American design tradition, we would like to include a few of your wood bowls in the exhibition. We prefer things that you produced perhaps as long as ten or even fifteen years ago. This will fulfill one important objective of the exhibition which is to focus attention on those articles of the 20th Century that may be considered "classics" of American design.

We have encountered some difficulty in borrowing even one of your pieces from private sources or museum collections -- because of the long period of the loan. Therefore, we would appreciate your shipping to us charges collect, during the coming week, three or four pieces from which we can make selections. For each

continued

piece please complete and return a Product Data sheet. These are needed here by March 25th for cataloging purposes.

Articles selected for the exhibition are transported to the various museums and insured fully at our expense until they are returned to you after the last showing in Dayton, in October 1960. Articles not selected for showing will be returned to you immediately.

Enclosed are an information sheet giving details of this major show and an itinerary that lists dates of the showings at each of the museums; also, a reply card which I would appreciate your returning immediately.

With many thanks,

Sincerely yours

W. Friedman

William Friedman
Visiting Curator of Design

FRANK W. KENT, DIRECTOR

E. B. CROCKER ART GALLERY

216 O STREET, SACRAMENTO 14, CALIFORNIA

HICKORY 6-4677

March 16, 1963

Mr. Robert Stocksdale
2147 Oregon Street
Berkeley 5, California

Dear Mr. Stocksdale:

We are indeed proud to have a cooperative group of people come to the aid of the Crocker Art Gallery this year as donors. I have announced the plan of opening a new gallery exclusively dovoted to the Crafts. This will be the second museum in the United States to initiate such a prospect, and the people are readily gathering in aid toward making this program a distinctive success.

Authoritative craftsmen of the several fields have aided in picking examples from this California Crafts III exhibition for the permanent crafts collection to occupy this new gallery. It will do you great honor and make us proud at presenting the much loved arts in the dignity due them. Your darker wooden cocobolo bowl was selected to be used in the dedication opening exhibition of the new Crafts Gallery.

Sincerely yours,

FRANK W. KENT
Director

FWK:fs

N. C. TEMPLETON, PRESIDENT — CHARLES M. MUSKAVITCH, CURATOR

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PROPERTY OF THE CITY OF SACRAMENTO | UNDER THE JOINT MANAGEMENT OF THE MAYOR AND THE CALIFORNIA MUSEUM ASSOCIATION, INCORPORATED

SAINT PAUL ART CENTER

476 SUMMIT AVENUE SAINT PAUL 2, MINNESOTA

MALCOLM E. LEI
DIRECTOR

Mr. Bob Stocksdale
2147 Oregon Street
Berkeley 5, California

Dear Mr. Stocksdale:

I am very much pleased to advise you that your entry, bowl 4x8, has been selected for purchase from the exhibition FIBER-CLAY-METAL. This exhibition is superior and exciting in every way. Your work will make an important addition not only to the selected group of purchases made from FIBER-CLAY-METAL, but also to our entire Permanent Collection.

As stated on the information form submitted for your work the selling price is $20.00. The form also indicated a 25% reduction in the event of sale or purchase by the Saint Paul Art Center; we are therefore enclosing our check in the amount of $15.00.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Saint Paul Art Center, I want to express our congratulations to you for your outstanding work as well as our appreciation for your interest.

Sincerely,

Malcolm E. Lein
Director

22 June
1 9 6 3

ILLINOIS
STATE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
20 NORTH WACKER DRIVE • CHICAGO 6 • TELEPHONE FRanklin 2-7373

November 22, 1963

Mr. Bob Stocksdale
2147 Oregon
Berkeley, California

Dear Friend Stocksdale:

Three or four years ago, while in Gumps in San Francisco, I bought two or three of your wooden trays and plates and I want to say again that I have never seen anything quite like these.

Since having these I have wondered several times since if you have any new designs or products "coming off the line" and, if so, whether you have available any catalog, or for that matter some brief printed description or photograph telling or showing what they are.

I am interested in a few Christmas gifts and since I have no plans now for coming out to San Francisco for probably a long time, I looked up your address in the Berkeley telephone book and decided to write you this letter. Of course another question would be whether you would be willing to sell me direct.

Will surely appreciate it if you will drop me a line by return mail answering the questions I have raised, giving me any descriptive material you have available and indicating whether you have any sales outlet either in Chicago or New York. A stamped return air mail envelope is attached.

Best regards.

Sincerely yours,

Ormond F. Lyman

OFL:mcl
Enc

Ormond F. Lyman
Executive Vice President

PASADENA ART MUSEUM, 46 North Los Robles Avenue, Pasadena, California 91101 • Telephone 793-5837

CALIFORNIA DESIGN®

cord sent

May 8, 1967

Mr. Bob Stocksdale
2147 Oregon Street
Berkeley, California

Dear Bob:

The CALIFORNIA DESIGN program of the Pasadena Art Museum takes great pleasure in asking you to be one of the craftsmen invited to submit to CALIFORNIA DESIGN X. This invitation, while an accolade to our security in the quality of your work, carries with it the earnest hope that you will honor us with the submission of a new and important piece. (There is a limit of 3 works per person.)

As you know, the coverage of this exhibition is vast and we feel a very real responsibility in projecting to the world the highest level of our output, and must maintain the right to withhold a work if it is qualitatively unsuitable.

Again, because of the exposure given these exhibitions, we ask that submissions be of new works, so that they may truly be reflective of the excellence of the current work of California's craftsmen.

We can accomodate works of large scale and welcome them, but excellence primarily and lack of previous exposure are our most compelling hopes. Will you be so kind as to let us know of your acceptance as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Eudorah M. Moore
Curator of Design

EMM:mk
enclosure.

Bernie Kester installing this time should do a top notch job — Hope you are back & that you've had a good year —

the
nuseum of contemporary craft
he American Craftsmen's Council · 29 West 53rd Street, New York, N. Y. 10019 · Telephone: Circle 6-684

May 6, 1969

Bob Stocksdale
2147 Oregon Street
Berkeley, California

Dear Mr. Stocksdale:

In the absence of Mr. Pressman I am answering his corespondence.

We thank you for your contribution and for the success that your pieces brought to the FEEL IT exhibition.

We are touched by your check, however we feel that there is no need for you to pay the Museum a commission. Allowing us to exhibit your work was more than enough commission.

Continued success.

Sincerely,

Ray Pierotti

Ray Pierotti
Administrative Assistant

When Sam Maloof was invited to write the Introduction to Bob Stocksdale's oral history memoir, he responded with a handwritten statement in calligraphy so handsome that it is virtually a piece of art in itself. This is one page. The Introduction itself begins on page iv, retyped for ease of reading, but as for beauty, type cannot compete with the Maloof original. --H.N.

I was first introduced to the world of woodturning by the industrial designer Henry Dreyfuss in 1946. He had a meeting at his home in Pasadena, Calif. concerning some furniture that he wanted me to do for his new home. During my visit he showed me some bowls that I had commented on. He told me that a friend of his James Prestini had made them for him. I had never seen bowls turned so thin and to such perfection. Some years later I met Bob Stocksdale at the Los Angeles County Fair — we both had been invited to show and demonstrate how we worked. This took place in 1952.

March 1998

FIBER ARTS

The San Francisco Bay Area has emerged as a nationally recognized center for creativity in the fiber arts in large measure because of the stimulation of faculty members at the University of California at Berkeley and at Davis. The group of interviews in the Fiber Arts Oral History Series documents several of those faculty members, other teachers and studio artists, and individuals whose work indicates the variety of techniques the fiber arts movement has generated. Underwritten by grants from the Mina Schwabacher Fund and a donation from the Friends of the Bancroft Library.

Elliott, Lillian Wolock (1930-1994), *Artist, Instructor, and Innovator in Fiber Arts*, 1992, 215 pp.

Laky, Gyöngy (b. 1944), Fiber artist. In process

Rossbach, Charles Edmund (b. 1914), *Artist, Mentor, Professor, Writer*, 1987, 156 pp.

Sekimachi, Kay, (b. 1926), *The Weaver's Weaver: Explorations in Multiple Layers and Three-Dimensional Fiber Art*, 1996, 154 pp.

Stocksdale, Bob (b. 1913), *Pioneer Wood-Lathe Artist, and Master Creator of Bowls from Fine and Rare Woods*, 1998, 164 pp.

Westphal, Katherine (b. 1919), *Artist and Professor*, 1988, 190 pp.

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Harriet Siegel Nathan

University of California at Berkeley alumna with two Journalism degrees: A.B. in 1941 and M. J. in 1965. Wrote for the on-campus paper, *The Daily Californian* ("Monarch of the College Dailies") as reporter, columnist, assistant women's editor, and managing editor. Prepared President Sproul's biennial report to the Legislature, 1942-44; wrote advertising copy; edited house journals; served on local and state boards of the League of Women Voters primarily in local and regional government and publications. As a graduate student, wrote for the University's *Centennial Record*. Worked as an interviewer/editor at the Regional Oral History Office part-time from the mid-sixties; concurrently served the Institute of Governmental Studies as Principal Editor doing editing, writing, research, production, and promotion of Institute publications. Wrote journal articles; and a book, *Critical Choices in Interviews: Conduct, Use, and Research Role* (1986) that included oral history interviews in the analysis. Also with Nancy Kreinberg co-authored the book, *Teachers' Voices, Teachers' Wisdom: Seven Adventurous Teachers Think Aloud* (1991), based on extended interviews with the teachers.

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